EXPLAINING DURATION OF LEADERSHIP CHANGE IN ARAB UPRISINGS THROUGH PERCEIVED POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES: COMPARING EGYPT AND SYRIA

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by
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Ankara
September 2016

To Elif, Cüneyt and Mahir

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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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ANKARA

September 2016

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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ABSTRACT

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PERCEIVED POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES:
COMPARING EGYPT AND SYRIA

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Egyptian President Mubarak was forced to leave office after turbulent public protests that lasted eighteen days in 2011. Yet, in the Syrian case, we have currently been witnessing a completely different state of affairs. Hence, this comparative work is an attempt at exploring the dynamics of change within the context of domestic politics in two of the most important 'Arab Spring' countries, Egypt and Syria. The present research seeks to answer the following question: During the recent uprisings in the Arab world, why has the removal from office of the incumbent leader is less likely in Syria when compared to Egypt? The purpose of this research is two-fold. First, it investigates whether or not the historical trajectories [particularly from early 1970s to 2011] of these two states indicate a substantial difference in terms of being politically open or closed and in having different institutions with different characteristics. Second, it examines to what extent the strategies implemented by the regimes during the uprisings (January 25, 2011- February 11, 2011 [Egypt] and March 2011-2014

[Syria]) influence the claim-making capabilities of those opposition groups and the structure of elite alliances within the society and political scene.

This work mainly follows the 'political process' (political opportunity structures) and 'framing' understandings of recent social movement literature, which describe the available and perceived opportunities and constraints of a political and institutional environment in which actors operate. Apart from the theoretical frameworks, the concept of 'Social Drama', envisaged by Victor Turner, has been employed as a *convenient template* to render the dynamics of the political processes under investigation more comprehensible. The data from large numbers of in-depth interviews with over 60 local informants is supported by an extensive literature review that includes very recent scholarly works in order to achieve more accurate claims. What is aimed at here is understanding this particular region better based on theoretically informed in-depth case studies, complemented by comparisons.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Egypt, Framing, Political Opportunity Structure, Social Drama, Syria

ÖZET

ARAP AYAKLANMALARINDAKİ LİDER DEĞİŞİM SÜRELERİNİN ALGILANAN SİYASİ FIRSAT YAPILARI BAĞLAMINDA AÇIKLANMASI: MISIR VE SURİYE KARŞILAŞTIRMASI

Dinçer, Osman Bahadır

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Saime Özçürümez Bölükbaşı

Eylül 2016

Mısır Cumhurbaşkanı Mübarek 2011 yılında 18 gün süren protestolar neticesinde görevini bırakmak zorunda kalırken Suriye'de halen bambaşka bir sürece şahitlik ediyoruz. Bu mukayeseli çalışma, Arap Baharı ülkeleri arasında önemli konumda olan Mısır ve Suriye'de iç politikada yaşanan siyasi değişim dinamiklerini açıklama gayretidir. Çalışmanın temel sorusu: Arap dünyasında yaşanan son ayaklanmalar sürecinde mevcut liderlerin koltuğundan edilme ihtimali Mısır ile kıyaslandığında Suriye'de neden daha düşüktür? Bu araştırmanın amacı iki aşamalıdır. İlk olarak her iki devletin tarihi gelişimlerinin [özellikle 1970-2011 arası] siyasi anlamda açık veya kapalı olmaları ve farklı özellikleri haiz kurumlara sahip olup olmamaları noktasında önemli bir fark ortaya koyup koymadığı incelenmektedir. İkinci olarak da ayaklanmalar esnasında [Mısır; 25 Ocak-11 Şubat 2011 ve Suriye; Mart 2011-2014] rejimlerin uyguladıkları stratejilerin muhalif grupların hak talep etme kapasitelerine ve toplumsal ve siyasal düzlemdeki elitler arası ittifak yapısına ne dereceye kadar etki ettiğini analiz etmektedir.

Bu çalışma esas itibariyle sosyal hareketler literatüründe aktörlerin varlık gösterdiği bir siyasi ve kurumsal yapının mevcut ve algılanan fırsatlarını ve kısıtlamalarını tanımlayan 'siyasal süreç' (siyasi fırsat yapıları) ve 'çerçeveleme' yaklaşımlarını teorik olarak takip etmektedir. Bu teorik çerçevenin yanı sıra Victor Turner'ın 'Sosyal Drama' kavramı da incelenen mevcut siyasi süreç dinamiklerini daha anlaşılır kılabilmek için uygun bir şablon olarak kullanılmıştır. 60'dan fazla yerel aktörle yapılmış derinlemesine mülakatlardan elde edilen bulgular daha sağlam ve doğru çıkarımlarda bulunabilmek amacıyla son dönem çalışmaların da dahil olduğu ikincil literatür taraması ile desteklenmiştir. Bu çalışmayla amaçlanan mukayeseli bir yaklaşımla teorik olarak derinlemesine incelenmiş vaka çalışmaları ile belli bir bölgeyi daha iyi anlayabilmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Baharı, Çerçeveleme, Mısır, Siyasi Fırsat Yapıları, Sosyal Drama, Suriye

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I should admit that research and writing period of this dissertation was a long, tiring and painful process for me because of two reasons. First, I tried to manage the whole process while I was working as a researcher at a research institute. It was a serious challenge to balance my academic and professional lives. Second, I have been through a major personal challenge in my family life. Our second son, Mahir was born with severe combined immunodeficiency. My wife, who is a medical doctor, and Mahir were bound to stay in the hospital for almost a year for the bone marrow transplant. We learned as a family how to struggle with this challenge, and our older son Cuneyt was one of our biggest supporters even though he was only two and a half years older than Mahir. I always felt as though I was rowing against a strong current but I always had Elif (my wife) and Cuneyt (my older son) with me as we held the hand of Mahir. I owe my family a big thanks. I wish Mahir and Cuneyt both grow up to read this acknowledgment and know that they have been part of an academic process since the very early years of their lives. I am and will remain very proud of them all.

At the end of the day, I have a completed Ph.D. dissertation. I have felt very fortunate for having a very distinguished and engaged dissertation committee. I enjoyed the invaluable academic support of Professor Saime Özçürümez, Professor Özlem Tür and Professor Ioannis Grigoriadis throughout many thesis progress committee meetings and in between. I observed from them that encouragement and appreciation motivates a Ph.D. candidate more than any other way of behavior. I would like to thank them for showing me that praise as the best motivator. I always walked out of my thesis committee meetings ready to take on more challenges, thank you.

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Even though I tried to cite the challenges of working while pursuing a PhD study above hand, I could not disregard the countless benefits of it. This holds true particularly if you are employed in a job in which you can fruitfully employ and cultivate your own research interests on the one hand while you continuously acquire a formal education in your doctoral study. I was lucky as I worked as a researcher at USAK where a few fertile minds came together and tried to produce empirically solid and scholarly valuable studies. The opportunities and networking capacity that USAK provided for me in terms of field research were quite ample. If I was able to

produce an empirically solid study in my dissertation here, I should underline that I owe much to USAK. There is no need to mention its intellectual climate that enabled cross-fertilization among people with different research interests.

USAK's warm and scholarly environment for me certainly deserves more elaboration, so let me unpack it a little bit further and bring it to your attention here. Ambassador Özdem Sanberk (President of USAK), Professor İhsan Bal (Head of USAK Scientific Committee) and Mehmet Tiraş (Vice President of USAK), as being my bosses, were also always supportive. Their wise guidance was extremely important for my success. I am sincerely grateful for their faith in me and their continuous support in all the years I have worked with them. They, with all my young colleagues at USAK, created a unique intellectual atmosphere which I have always felt and benefitted from. I would like to express my thanks to every single of my colleagues at USAK, particularly the ones whom I have been working more than five years together; Dr. Mustafa Kutlay, Dr. Mehmet Yegin, Hasan Selim Özertem, Dr. Fatma Yılmaz Elmas, Dr. Habibe Özdal, Gülay Mutlu and Dr. Fouad Farhoui. I would also like to thank all of my friends who supported me in writing, and encouraged me to strive towards my goal.

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All in all, I had the privilege to have a strong alliance around me; which enabled me to overcome the huge challenges.

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INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction

In the post-colonial period, political structures and regimes had emerged in a variety of forms[1] across the Middle East. While many of the colonial-embedded ruling monarchies lost power after widespread waves of Arab nationalism (Choueiri, 2000; Dawisha, 2003) and revolution, for the most part, a single power source has dominated the heads of governments across the region in the form of authoritarian republicanism (Posusney & Angrist, 2005; King, 2007; Khalili, 2009; Ayubi, 2000; Pratt, 2007). Put differently, the peoples of the region have been deprived of many of their rights, mired in poorly structured economic systems that have become synonymous with rentier/crony capitalism and ruled by dictators for decades.[2] However, once the notion that the people were impotent in the face of public authority was disposed of in Egypt and Tunisia in early 2011, an outburst of social reaction (aka 'Arab Spring') [3] began to occur in many other countries such as Syria,

[1] Drawing from Henry and Springborg (2001), these can mainly be categorized into three different types: Praetorian republics (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen), monarchies (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) and democracies (Iran, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey). For further insights see Owen (2000). It should be noted that "the colonial legacies were in turn shaped by the different styles of authoritarianism over the last sixty years" (Anderson, 2011a: 21). Also see Bill & Springborg (1999: 21-61).

[2] For analysis of Middle East economies from a historical perspective see Owen and Pamuk (1998); Henry and Springborg (2001).

[3] Recently there are many academic & popular articles and books on this particular subject referred to as the "Arab Spring", "Arab Uprisings", "Arab Revolutions", "Arab Awakening" and so on. For some examples see; Noueihed and Warren, (2012); Gelvin (2012); Lynch (2012); Bowen (2012); Manhire (2012); Dabashi, (2012); Mabrook, (2012).

Yemen, Libya and Bahrain. In other words, the possibility of a domino effect, which had been voiced from the very beginning of the revolts, became an undeterred reality of the entire region.[4] People of the Arab world who had recognized that being afraid of the regimes (Ghonim, 2012: 1-27) was no longer valid, embarked on the struggle for transforming the political structure and liberating their honor and dignity (*al-karama*).

Each and every single meeting and interview that I conducted with Arabs from different countries while preparing this research ended with the same concluding sentence: "We also would like to express ourselves" (Also see Hanafi 2012: 198-213). At this point, Lisa Anderson (2011a: 17), the Head of American University in Cairo states:

> The nearly universal complacent, unresponsive, and often contemptuous policies and positions of the governments produced a nearly universal response –demands for effective citizenship, personal agency, and government accountability. Hence in almost all of the protests, the accent on the rhetoric of dignity as opposed to the rhetoric of economic demands is significant.[5]

What has been stated above illustrates that the corrupt administrations/leaders of the region have failed to govern their countries (dysfunctional states) and were subject to change if they wanted to continue ruling.[6] To B. Kodmani (personal communication, November 13, 2014), the Director of Arab Reform Initiative, "when protests started across the region the message from the people was that these regimes had proven after many years of attempts at reforming them, that they could not be reformed and therefore they needed to be changed, overthrown -whether violently or not violently". Mubarak's achievements, for instance, in Arafat's (2009: 138) words were, "shamefully inadequate considering his long tenure" (Also see Hassan 2012: 95-97).[7] Prior Arab Human Development Reports have thoroughly acknowledged the

[4] Yet, in subsequent waves, the protest demonstrations in Libya and Syria which turned into bloodbaths, were harbingers of a domino effect which massively reshaped the geopolitics of the Middle East.
[5] Also see Isa (2012: 39).
[6] Al-Rodhan et al (2013: 174-212) address this particular argument in their recent book and talk about possible approaches to manage the change in the region.
[7] Hassan describes the Egyptian system as "democracy without democrats".

freedom, long-standing democracy and good governance deficit in the Arab world.[8] What was worse is the level of oppression under which all society lives. As evaluated by B. Kodmani (personal communication, November 13, 2014) and N. Mustafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012), this situation begets increased violence, anger and acts of desperation.[9]

Yet, despite the picture presented above, no one envisaged that the year 2011 would be so critical for the Arab world and that upheavals of such proportion and intensity would take place and led to the "unceremonious departure" (Beinin & Vairel, 2011: ix) of at least a few leaders of the region, namely Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mobarak (Gause III, 2011: 81-90). In this regard, R. Brynen (2012: 1) states:

> While we can endlessly debate who was most right about the emergence of mass, regime toppling protest movements… it remains the case that few if any analysts in either academic political science or government diplomatic and intelligence agencies expected such a widespread challenge to the authoritarian status quo to emerge in the region so fast, and with such dramatic event.

In this respect, looking back at the events with the hindsight of a couple of years, 2011 can be viewed as a breaking point for the Arabs (Al-Rodhan et al, 2013: 166-214).[10] It is very difficult to predict how these uprisings will shape the course of history in the region and what their outcomes will be, since the recent change-oriented process does not feature a linear progress curve. Yet, regardless of how they ultimately transpire and what shape the new political systems will take, it is widely acknowledged that the authoritarian structures have been undermined [by offering unthinkable concessions (Lynch, 2012: 7)], in Gerges's (2014: 1) words "a psychological and epistemological rupture has occurred in the Arab world". In the same vein, it can be argued that "Arab politics –in the sense of discussion and contestation about public affairs- has been reborn" (Brown, 2012: 10). Moreover, some may argue that Arab Spring has turned out to be a winter or a spring but no flowers (Ghanem, 2016: 7), disappointment or failure and lost the momentum for

[8] For the four Arab Human Development Reports (2002, 2004, 2005, and 2009) see Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR) (United Nations Development Programme, 2010).
[9] These figures are two prominent women political scientists in the Arab World.
[10] They also predicted that 2011 would be a critical juncture, a turning point for the Middle Eastern people.

change. In any case, as Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 2) note that "the region will never be the same and… the mass protests of 2011 are milestones separating 'before' from 'after'" in many aspects.[11]

1.2 Research Question and the Argument

Unprecedented events started to emerge when the realization of the fact that the people could challenge the authority was combined with the realities of the region such as inequality, corruption, crony capitalism, restricted freedoms and the systemic degeneration of regional countries intensified in different areas (al-Rodhan, 2013: 167-174). Yet, in spite of the similarities at the macro level, this struggle brought differences in terms of the processes, outcomes and diversity of the states at the micro level (Anderson, 2011a). In that respect, conditions in the countries subsequent to Tunisia and Egypt have become more complicated. As a matter of fact what has been happening in Libya and Syria is a very critical sign of that reality. In fact institutions and societies that have proven themselves to be different, the geopolitical location of these countries, and the interaction of elites, all of these factors have led to the engendering of different processes.

The uprisings had first been sparked in Tunisia; however Egypt, due to certain historical, political and demographic reasons turned this spark into a flame (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 3). This makes Egypt one of the most important 'Arab Spring' countries in terms of encouraging people for mobilization all around the Arab world (Leyla, 2012: 26-27). What has been happening in Syria, on the other hand, also has a very determining role in terms of influencing the emotions and perceptions of the Arab people for discouraging them from mobilization. In other words, Syria, due to a couple of historical, political and societal reasons as well turned the full-fledged flame into an actual uncontrollable fire. This also makes Syria one of the most important 'Arab Spring' countries (Lynch, 2014: 23). All in all, somehow Egypt and Syria are the two 'Arab Spring' countries that have been occupying the world agenda most since the very beginning of the uprisings.[12] This Ph.D. thesis compares Egypt

[11] Also el-Ghobashy (2011a) describes the uprisings in Egypt as the "defining event of Egyptian politics, a turning point separating the before and after".

[12] At the present time Egypt and Syria are still the main 'Arab Spring' countries that the international community keeps talking about. Other Arab Spring countries like Yemen, Bahrain and Libya are not on the world agenda any more as much as the former two states.

and Syria's political systems with particular reference to the state-society relations within the context of recent uprisings and generates new data for further comparison between these countries.

Given these two different paths in Egypt and Syria, the present research seeks to answer the following questions: 1) During the recent uprisings in the Arab world, why is the leadership change in Egypt more likely when compared to Syria? 2) To what extent do the historical trajectories of Egypt and Syria indicate a substantial difference in terms of being politically open or closed and in having different institutions that exhibit different characteristics? 3) To what extent does the openness or closedness of a polity determine or shape the activities of the countermovement agents? 4) To what extent do the strategies implemented by the regimes during the uprisings influence the claim-making capabilities of the opposition groups and the structure of elite alliances within the society and political scene? 5) To what extent do the political opportunity structures explain the duration of leadership change as a policy outcome in Egypt and Syria? 6) To what extent does the counter-framing process influence the perceptions and motivations of the activists and the knowledge or beliefs of possible alliances and opponents of the collective action? Thus, by using leadership change as proxy for understanding the continuity of authoritarian regime types, this study differs from the rest of the literature as focuses on political opportunity structures and framing rather than traditional state-society relationship approach and authoritarianism.

Apart from the importance of these two states, the choice of Egypt and Syria as case studies is intentional also due to the lack of substantial research comparing these two important countries. While the tendency in political science literature considers Egypt and Syria as similarly authoritarian (post-populist authoritarian systems)[13], this research emphasizes the differences between the two systems with particular reference to the dynamics of state society relations or the shifting political opportunities given by the states to the public for mobilization. In Stacher's words "the differences between the two states highlight and provide insight that complicates and problematizes thinking about Arab regimes" (2007: 14). Comparing two

[13] For theoretical models that suggest similarities see Richards & Waterbury (1996: 275-308); Ayubi (2001).

countries as in the study of Misztal and Jenkins (1995) allows me to identify the political processes and the different outcomes in a particular region. What is aimed at here is understanding this particular region better based on theoretically informed in-depth case studies, complemented by comparisons. Current theories and paradigms need to be examined as to their relevance and explanatory value for this region. We also need to examine historical and empirical data gathered from different states in light of expectations derived from theory.

I argue that a comparative analysis of Egypt and Syria in terms of their 'political opportunity structures and the resistance strategies of states' is a potent avenue of inquiry that yields relevant insights with respect to the literature on social movements and transition.[14] Having lived under an authoritarian regime for years, there is no doubt that the Egyptian people had accomplished a formidable task by breaking their chains in 2011, despite witnessing another military coup in 2013.[15] Mubarak was forced to leave office after turbulent public protests that lasted eighteen days. Everything else aside, upon close examination, the exit (ousting) of Mubarak was in itself a critical process. Yet, in the Syrian case, we have currently been witnessing a completely different state of affairs. The Assad family still maintains its regime through the use of different strategies

As stated above, social change and political transformations in the Arab world have already opened new avenues of inquiry. They have also heightened attention paid to the domestic politics of Arab states and will inspire more extensive comparative work. The various fortunes, or better said the varying degrees of success of different movements in differing countries within the Arab world indicate that comparative research will be a promising tool in analyzing the events of 2011-2012. Hence, this comparative work is also an attempt at exploring the dynamics of change within the context of domestic politics in two of the most important 'Arab Spring' countries, Egypt and Syria.

[14] For the detailed review of the theoretical literature see chapter II.
[15] For an insightful discussion on whether the Arab spring (particularly in Egypt) has turned out to be a mere disappointment when compared to the earlier euphoria see Hecan (2014: 31-34).

Hence, the purpose of this research is two-fold. First, it investigates whether or not the historical trajectories [particularly from early 1970s to 2011] of these two states indicate a substantial difference in terms of being politically open or closed and in having different institutions with different characteristics (see Part I). It is widely investigated in the Part 1 that it is not only about what happened during the uprisings but also the nature of mobilization style and experience of the protestors before the uprisings that matter. Second, this research examines to what extent the strategies implemented by the regimes during the uprisings (January 25, 2011- February 11, 2011 [Egypt] and March 2011-2014 [Syria]) influence the claim-making capabilities of those opposition groups and the structure of elite alliances within the society and political scene (see Part II). This study proposes that all of these elements have an impact on the success/failure of the movements currently in question.

The findings of the thesis suggest that each system has authoritarian characteristics within closed polities. Yet, the level of closedness is higher in Syria due to different reasons addressed in the whole document. Even in a superficial sense, one could say that Egypt is a more open society. What this work attempts to do is to explain the difference between the authoritarian structures in these two countries systematically in light of the literature that focuses on the emergence of Western social movements and their interactions with the state. In other words, the proposals of this thesis can be stated as three different arguments: Firstly, it is proposed that regimes are more inclined to use counter-framing and repression when the degree of closedness of the polity is high, [which means that the institutions are more politicized, the stability of political alignments among the elites is powerful enough to maintain regime cohesiveness and the international constraints on the rulers are low]. Secondly, it is argued that leadership change as a policy outcome is less likely when regimes are more capable of negatively influencing the activist's perceptions and motivations and able to bend the beliefs and knowledge of possible alliances or opponents of the collective action in favor of the regimes. Finally, this work reveals that leadership change as a policy outcome is more likely when the openness of the polity is high, [which means that politics are highly institutionalized, elites are more flexible in terms of positioning themselves in a volatile political atmosphere and the interaction with the Western world is more profound not only at the political level but also the societal and institutional levels as well.] This work reveals that the impact of foreign

policy or the relationship with the outside world on the structure and the reflexes of these two states is two-fold; either it puts a direct impact as itself by constraining or widening the authorities' space of maneuver or it has been used by the authorities in order to maximize their legitimacy.

A multidisciplinary approach has been employed in seeking answers to the questions above with regards to Egypt and Syria. I argue that the buttresses of political science, sociology and anthropology provide the study with the conceptual and theoretical tools with which to present a more intelligible and comprehensive picture (see chapter II). That is to say, such an approach provides the researcher with extra channels through which the research can be made more articulate and eloquent. In this sense, this work mainly follows the 'political process' (political opportunity structures) and 'framing' understandings of recent social movement literature (political science and sociology), which describe the available and perceived opportunities and constraints of a political and institutional environment in which actors operate. Moreover, apart from the theoretical frameworks, the concept of 'Social Drama' (anthropology), envisaged by Victor Turner, will be employed as a *convenient template* to render the dynamics of the political processes under investigation more comprehensible. Put differently, Turner's concept of 'Social Drama' is going to be described as the 'larger game at play', while the interactions between parties act as micro-level guideposts in the processes. This study systematically reveals that an eclectic model by adding the 'framing approach' (culture) into the political process approach has provided a more functional toolkit for explaining the differences between two dramas and the phases of Social Drama are able to account for Syria and Egypt as well. In other words, a 'perceived political opportunity structure' approach could increase the analytical leverage in explaining the variation in outcomes in the Arab uprisings. Incorporating the concept of 'Social Drama' to the mainstream social movement approaches and by doing so revealing the overlappings is one of the orginial contributions of this study.

This work, which mainly employs a qualitative method (formal and informal interviews, content analysis, participant observation, ethnographic field work and a review of secondary literature), includes micro, meso, and macro level analyses that put on display the multilateral interactions between different actors. The data from

large numbers of interviews is supported by a literature review that includes very recent scholarly works in order to achieve more accurate claims. The main techniques used in this study were formal and informal interview methods. I tried to evaluate both the developments experienced and the discussions held in Egypt and Syria, specifically in the context of the 'Arab Spring', through conducting in-depth interviews with over 60 local informants. These first-hand observations have enabled this research to present consistent, reliable, and suitable analyses as well as being a basis for further studies.

1.3 New Avenues of Inquiry in Arab Politics

The protests and upheavals unfolding in the Arab world since 2011 have brought the validity of a variety of notions about comparative politics into question.[16] For example, although the theoretical literature usually argues that the phenomena of achieving policy outcomes through the mobilization of the people, or the dynamics of "politics from below" (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 9), as only being applicable to Western social movements,[17] the recent incidents reveal that this claim can no longer be sustained.[18] This is particularly true insomuch as the popular insurrections witnessed in the Arab world demonstrate that many essential conditions that help bring about social movements as well as the ability of such movements to effectuate change, have matured (Korany, 2010).

In that sense present study argues that the necessary motivation which enables the mobilization of people having valid and strong reasons to alter the political,

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[16] As McAdam et al (2009: 266) argue "perhaps more than any other sector of comparative politics, the study of contentious politics is highly sensitive to developments in the real world".

[17] Tarrow (1994; second edition 1998) and della Porta & Mario Diani (2001), both in a way represent what Charles Tilly (1975) was some 30 years ago: the most powerful and comprehensive overview of the scholarly literature on social movements. Della Porta and Diani's volume offers us an open window to a wealth of studies of social movements which have contributed in making this field a real 'growth industry'. And also for a book discussing general concepts and cases in social movement literature see Goodwin & Jasper (2003)

[18] Particularly within the last twenty years there have started to emerge some scholarly works focusing on other regions of the world; see Zdravomyslova (1996: 122-140). While looking "at former Communist states, she suggests that Western conceptions work pretty well when applied to movements elsewhere and under different political circumstances". For some other important works on this topic see Schock (2005); Bayat (2010); El-Mahdi & Marflett (2009); Wickham (2002); Wiktorowicz (2004). Particularly Wiktorowicz's book was an unprecedented success challenging the orientalist perspectives on Islamic protest movements. Lastly, just before the Arab uprisings, Beinin & Vairel (2011) contributed to this relatively untouched area by releasing their edited volume. Unlike Wictorowicz's one Beinin and Vairel's volume does not only focus on the Islamic movements but also devotes significant attention to secular protests movements as well.

economic, and social environment in which they live is better secured in the Arab World as well. Contrary to the Orientalist approaches, it is seen that Arabs, as other rational peoples, can involve themselves in collective actions when the necessary circumstances permit and that such opportunities are available on a systemic level. Indeed, Beinin and Variel (2011: 2) touch upon this point in their book, which was released just before the uprisings embarked in 2011, by arguing that:

> … the Middle East and North Africa can be understood using the tools that social science has developed for the rest of the world. And we argue that the MENA is a complex and a fascinating laboratory, not only to confirm the applicability of SMT but also to enrich our theoretical knowledge of social movements and other forms of contestation.

In this respect, these recent developments are more likely to also affect how we study the region. Particularly for political scientists specializing in the region, the events of recent social change and political transformation represented, in Lynch's (2012: 3) words, "an exhilarating moment of potential change but also an important opportunity to develop new research questions, engage in new comparisons and exploit new data" (Also see Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 2). As Lynch (2012: 3; 2014: 4) rightly puts, "the Arab uprisings challenged long-held theories dominant in the field, particularly about the resilience of authoritarian regimes, while opening up entirely new areas of legitimate social scientific inquiry". Researchers have already started to ask new questions and the study of these upheavals will generate new theoretical insights (Brownlee, Masoud & Reynolds, 2015: 18-39).[19] In recent years, there has already been a growing interest among Arab world specialists in connecting the study of the region's political and social dynamics with comparative analysis of the processes of change and contentious politics (see Bayat, 2010; Posusney & Angrist, 2007; King, 2009; Ottoway & Choucair-Vizoso, 2008; Heacock, 2002; Browers, 2009); Brown & Hamzawy, 2010; Khalili, 2009); Beinin & Vairel, 2011). The latest uprisings have already further energized this trend (Ghanem, 2016; Gerges, 2015; Brownlee, Masoud & Reynolds, 2015; Lynch, 2014; Gerges, 2014;

[19] For a detailed study on contentious politics, which has already started to be considered one of the most attractive and insightful theoretical approaches to Middle East politics, see Korany and el-Mahdi's (2012) recent work on the Arab Spring. They argue that there was too much emphasis placed on the top of the political system, at the expense of its base, i.e. on politics from above, excluding the dynamics of politics from below. The objective in their latest book is to bring the two into balance.

Tripp, 2013; Paczynska, 2013: 217-221; Brynen, Moore, Sallokh & Zahar, 2012). The study of these protests and social movements in *different* countries with *different* political opportunities and *different* strategies implemented by state bodies will also generate new insights.

As Agnieszkea Paczynska (2011) rightly predicted, "the role of political opportunity structure in facilitating or hindering of collective action, resource mobilization and framing [and] the influence of particular political, social and economic institutional structures of a state on the dynamics of contentious action" are going to be investigated by many scholars with particular attention given to the Arab world. The fact that such a significant series of events where such a large number of people took to the streets across the Arab world had caught many researchers off guard indicates that the research on social movements conducted in the region has been limited (Beinin & Vairel, 2011: 2)[20] until recently and will thusly be examined in a more meticulous and delicate manner in future. In other words, the social and political revitalization/transformation in the Arab world will be the subject of much research, and enjoy a prominent place in political science literature (Roy, 2012: 5-18). At this point, Alimi and Meyer (2011: 475) underline that the wave of political contention in the Arab world brings "a raft of new data to use in testing and revising the theories about how the world works".

The study fills a gap in the literature by applying theoretical concepts developed in social movement studies in general through an empirical study of Egypt and Syria. With this in mind, the present study is an attempt to investigate in detail a particular portion of these questions that have been raised in connection to the recent upheavals in the Arab world. My main concern is try to make a theoretical contribution and obtain an understanding about applying social movement approaches to the Arab world's authoritarian states and suppressed people of them. This study's theoretical implications suggest that contrary to the general assumptions, the main approaches of social movement literature, the 'political process' and 'framing' approaches, are able to account for the processes in Egypt and Syria, as well as systematically account for the differences between them. This study also shows that despite similarities between

[20] For Beinin and Vairel (2011: 2) the "Middle East has largely been on the side lines of this intellectual trend".

Egyptian and Syrian post-populist authoritarian state structures, different political processes of state-society relations are at work as each state pursues authoritarian upgrading. Therefore, it suggests that social movement approaches offer remarkable theoretical toolkits and opportunities to explore developments in the Middle East and to explain the differences among the states of the region with the help of evidence (empirical data) from the field in times of struggle for rights and self-expression.

1.4 Organization of the Study

Beginning with a theoretical and conceptual framework (chapter II) that considers the limited utility of 'political process' and 'framing' theoretical approaches in the Middle Eastern studies, the study underscores the potential of applicability of these approaches to authoritarian Arab states. In that sense, my comparison of two similar post-populist authoritarian systems in Egypt and Syria attempts to reveal the existence of structural and operational differences in terms of mobilization.

This study consists of two different parts (Part I and Part II) and 9 chapters. In line with the periodization of the flow of social events suggested by Turner's 'Social Drama' approach, this thesis also operationalizes this processual division by gathering the chapters into two main parts excluding the introduction [chapter I], theory [chapter II] and conclusion [chapter IX] chapters. It is aimed throughout this study to develop a more coherent treatment of the periods in question and a clearer distinction between the two periods in terms of 'political opportunity structures', primarily by delineating the two periods in a more explicit way. In that sense, Turner's Social Drama approach has provided an extremely useful template for distinguishing the two periods.

The purpose of the first section (Part I) is to provide the historical, political and social contexts within which the parties (state and protestors) are embedded. This phase is narrated in two separate chapters devoted to Egypt and Syria respectively (chapter IV-V). Part I discusses the general characteristics of the Egyptian and Syrian states and societies up until 2011, and particularly in the last decade. Thus, chapter IV and chapter V serve as historical reviews, which trace and explain the divergence in institutional formation, state-society relations and inter-elite dynamics after Anwar Sadat and Hafez al-Assad assumed power in early 1970s. In this context, this section

focuses especially on matters such as the structure of state institutions, their autonomy or lack thereof, the role of the president within this system, the primary dynamics of inter-institutional relations (whether this presents any coherence), democratic procedures and foreign relations.

Part II, which consists of three chapters, covers the period from the onset of the social upheavals that unfolded both in Egypt and Syria in 2011 to the moment when the incumbent leaders are forced to leave or a sort of schism unfolds. In the chapter where I deal with Egypt (chapter VII), I only analyze the 18-day period between the January 25, 2011 to February 11, 2011 (when Mubarak stepped down) with the help of theoretical frameworks provided by the 'political opportunity structure' and 'framing' approaches, while in the chapter that I investigate the Syrian crisis (chapter VIII) I cover the whole process from 2011 until 2014 when it became obvious that a certain level of schism start to feature the Syrian drama. Unlike in the Mubarak case in Egypt, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad still maintains his power. For that reason, the period under investigation in the Syrian case is much longer.

After providing the historical, political and social contexts within which the actors are embedded in Part I, the second part works to demonstrate how the interactions between parties during the crisis and redressive action phases (Social Drama approach) of the upheavals evolved and how each determined the responses and perceptions of the other, and, finally, brought the crisis to its ultimate outcome. That is to say, after examining the basic dimensions of the 'structure', a closer look will be directed at the positions of the actors. Therefore, the second part (chapter VII and chapter VIII) focuses not on the stable characteristics of the interactions, but rather the procedural aspects of the uprisings first in Egypt and then Syria. In doing so, it draws mainly on interviews with individuals who have personally experienced and witnessed the Egyptian and Syrian uprisings to evaluate what has happened and how these events have affected the parties involved within the context of 'political opportunity structures' and 'framing' approaches.

Moreover, in spite of the fact that I have devoted a separate chapter to the theoretical framework, I have preferred to discuss the relevancy of the related theoretical approaches to the cases in a detailed manner in a separate short chapter in each part

(chapter III in Part I and chapter VI in Part II) before proceeding to the cases themselves.

Chapter IX is the concluding chapter in which the results of the study, and theoretical implications are detailed. It compares and explains the differences between the Egyptian and Syrian dramas as traceable to the 1970s. The findings suggest that each system has authoritarian characteristics within closed polities. Yet, the level of closedness is higher in Syria due to different reasons addressed in the previous chapters. This chapter concludes by questioning the social movement literature and by inferring some theoretical implications.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL CONCERNS, THE EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The upheavals in Egypt and Syria came about in different ways and are continuing to produce societies with different prospects (Gerges, 2015: 1-21). Striving to understand the crucial dynamics of these different processes in these two pivotal countries of the Arab world is of great importance. In this respect, this research mainly aims to analyze the recent social change and political transformation processes of the two Arab states in a comparative manner. From a very general standpoint, what has been happening in Egypt and Syria essentially revolves around interaction between parties (authorities/state/state agencies and the people/protesters/challengers) or about 'contentious politics' from a theoretical point of view. At this particular point, it should be underlined that "the social movement involves sustained challenges to power holders in the name

of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of concerted public displays of that population's worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (McAdam et al, 2009: 278).

What I mean by contentious politics is "episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, and object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants" (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001: 5). How their relations were formed from a historical perspective, what their main characteristics are (institutional, economic, etc.), how they have perceived each other and how they have been positioning themselves (before and during the uprisings) are the main points that ought to be taken into account while conducting research on this topic (Beinin & Variel, 2011: 8).

Moreover, the question of how all of these considerations are narrated in an intelligible manner is also quite important in terms of presenting the analyses and findings. That being said, through a detailed investigation of the uprisings, not only in Egypt and Syria but in all the 'Arab Spring' countries, one can observe similar sequences of behavior with regards to the interactions between the protestors and the state agents, albeit with different outcomes (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476; Patel, Bunce & Wolchik, 2014: 57-74). In other words, the 'Arab Spring' as a whole was a change-oriented process that follows certain typological cycles of behaviors.[21] At this point, it can be argued that the challengers in the countries of the region who could find similarities between themselves and the agents in the Tunisian drama, "emulated the protesters copying tactics and rhetoric", thus at the same time implying that the episodes of interaction between the challengers and the authoritarian governments across the region somehow trace similar phases with varying outcomes (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476).[22] Therefore, it may be argued that the subsequent uprisings emerging in other countries of the region, such as Egypt, Libya, Syria and Bahrain,

[21] At this point, McFarland's (2004) basic approach that adapts Turner's social drama concept to student-teacher relations has been used as an important reference point in this study. It should be noted that McFarland's analogy of student-teacher has been highly beneficial for the arguments of this study.
[22] These sequences are implemented by intentional actors in order to guide interaction. See McFarland (2004).

share similar, if not identical, cycles of behaviors and impulses with Tunisia. Even by examining each country superficially, it is possible to observe degeneration in state-society relations derived from similar problems in the last couple of decades (al-Rodhan, 2013: 168-170).[23]

Due to the rupture, throughout these processes, we have witnessed first the self-immolation of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi and then protests against authority postulate demands. Especially after the breakout of the uprisings, the state and protesters intensively interacted by way of negotiation, repression, etc. and even if the outcomes were different throughout the region, the cycle or sequence of the interaction or behavior was the same. However, the fact that outcomes did vary across the region "reflect[s] the capacity of authoritarians to consolidate their bases of support and repress effectively, and the willingness of dissidents with very different aims to cooperate in their efforts and focus on a common enemy and share interim goals" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 477). In the same vein, L. Anderson (2011a) highlights the importance of the differing institutional, economic and historical contexts in which every single state emerges and operates. She reiterates, "You see common impulses to revolt in very different contexts and that means that the character of the revolt and the consequences of the revolt will obviously be filtered through these different contexts and have different outcomes in different countries" (Anderson, 2011a: 21).

Underpinnings or underlying factors of these differences emerge from the aforementioned authoritarian capacity and structure. Firstly, due to the infringement of the social contract[24], people rushed into the squares and streets, and since then, interaction between actors has intensified. Depending on the abovementioned capacity, attainment of the demanded objective or experiencing of a wider crisis become possible. In this regard, in Egypt and Tunisia, people achieved their goals,

[23] Degeneration in state-society relations might be understood as the persistent crisis of governance and state failure.

[24] We may summarize what the main features of "infringement of the social contract" or "dignity deficit" as follows by adopting from al-Rodhan et al (2013: 184-197): prevalent dogma, lack of security, human rights abuses, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, absence of justice, lack of opportunity, lack of innovation, lack of inclusiveness.

namely the reassignment or overthrow of their president, but in Syria, a similar process continues to advance towards a different conclusion.

2.2 Turner's Social Drama as the Larger Game at Play

I argue that all these experiences are akin to Victor Turner's concept of 'Social Drama'. Social drama, as a very popular concept in social/political anthropology, is defined as a process composed of four stages: "1) breach of social relations, 2) mounting crisis, 3) redressive action and 4) reintegration or recognition of schism" (Turner, 1957: 91-92). From a different point of view, Alimi and Meyer (2011) argue that they are, as 'political scientists', analytically invested in a political process or political opportunity framework while assessing the general picture of the Arab uprisings. They believe that giving importance to the ever-changing contexts "can provide analytical leverage in understanding how dramatic events (Yahya, 2012) [e.g Buazizi's self-immolation] generate responses". They state that:

> Bouazizi's self-immolation was not necessarily the single spark that would provoke an Arab Spring, but the conditions across the Middle East and North Africa had made it possible for such sparks to create contagion at this time. The search for sparks may serve the need for simplicity and drama, yet runs the risk of overlooking the role of broader processes and developments that may explain insurgents' ability to sustain mobilization even after the initial exhilaration abates (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476).

Thus, the concept of 'Social Drama' can be proposed as providing a convenient template that allows the telling of stories of the Egyptian and Syrian experiences of political and social transformation in an ordered and structured manner. As for Turner (1957), social dramas arise in "a society that shares key values when a) competing principles, which groups or individuals in conflict invoke to support their positions but which do not take precedence over each other, lead to a serious breach in the social order; and b) there is a common norm that each side contends the other has broken" (cited in Ross, 2001: 167).[25] Turner developed his conceptual

[25] Turner (1957: 89-90) illustrates that the social dramas occur "from structural contradictions between Ndembu norms of inheritance and resistance, result in marital and village instability and tension, which increase during contests for succession to village headmanship".

framework around social dramas based on his personal experience of living Ndembu (a local tribe) life for five years in Zambia.[26] Yet, for Turner (1980: 152):

> Social drama is a well-nigh universal processual form and represents a perpetual challenge to all aspirations to perfection in social and political organization.… In some cultures its profile is clear cut and its style abrasive; in others, agonistic (contestative) action may be muted or deflected by elaborate codes of etiquette.

Hence, in light of Turner's typology, I have discovered that the cases in this study are also embedded with similar sequences akin to social drama. Hence following Turner's processual approach not only provides new insights for my research but also grants it a degree of lucidity with regards to the flow of events.

A social drama "first introduces itself as the breach of a norm, the infraction of a rule of morality, law, custom, or etiquette in public arena" (Turner, 1980: 150). Indeed, this breach is seen as the manifestation of a deeper division of interests and loyalties that comes to appear on the surface. The emergence of a breach may be intentional, even projected, "contrived by a person or party disposed to demonstrate or challenge entrenched authority –for example, the Boston Tea Party- or emerge from a scene of heated feelings. Once visible it can be hardly be revoked" (Turner, 1980: 150). For instance, Tunisian Bouazizi who had ignited himself, Egyptian Khaled who was killed by police and the tortured Syrian children in Der'a could all be regarded as the exposed faces of a breach. Even though these incidents can be seen as sparks of a larger change, actually they are not small incidents but occurrences within a cumulative breach. In our examples, we are analyzing a state in which there is a dysfunctional social contract and inconvenient state-society relations.

The type of resistance/protest, the level of support it attains and the context in which it emerges all designate when a breach engenders a crisis. When a breach is embraced by much of the people, it almost consistently undermines the current state of affairs and makes it difficult to explicate what is going on (McFarland, 2004: 1271). Furthermore, when the situation is undermined, a degree of '*liminality*' may

[26] Turner (1957, 1967, 1974, 198) has discussed social dramas at length in several books, both in small-scale societies, such as Ndembu, at the village level and in complex nations.

arise. In other words, the questioning of roles, disablement of all interpretive frames and removal of hierarchical distinctions are most likely to occur (McFarland, 2004: 1271; Turner, 1982). During the phase of crisis the divisions and coalitions of interests become explicitly apparent. That is to say, "in social dramas, false friendship is winnowed from true communality of interests; the limits of consensus are reached and realized; real power emerges from behind the façade of authority" (Turner, 1980: 151). In this process, especially after the first incidents that are fuelled with amassed grievances, the masses revolt against the state, encountering authority.

A crisis may emerge either from a situation in which an authority is nonplused, confused and at an impasse (where *liminality* occurs), or from the interaction of actors in which the authority, in particular, knows exactly how to react to insurgencies. This is a stage in which the position of every actor has been questioned and where cost-benefit analysis has been adopted in forming new alliances.

In the course of this particular stage, agents of the state carry out "redressive actions aimed at limiting the crisis and defining how the system should proceed" (McFarland, 2004: 1276). Redressive actions come mostly from the authority, which adopts a range of 'framing strategies' in order to maintain control (McFarland, 2004: 1276; Also see Snow, Rochford & Benford, 1986). Opposition groups also use framing strategies in response to the state in an effort to strengthen and widen their breach (McFarland, 2004: 1276). In this period, by sealing possible alliances or closing the ranks, actors initiate persuasion activities so as to gain an upper hand. In order to limit the expansion of the breach, some informal and formal redressive mechanisms are put into operation. In Turner's (1980: 151) words:

> These mechanisms vary in character with such factors as the depth and significance of the breach, the social inclusiveness of the crisis, the nature of the social group within which the breach took place, and the group's degree of autonomy in regard to wider systems and social relations.

Each and every party proposes their options for solutions to the crisis while trying to attract support and taking "aggressive definitional measures" in the redress phase (McFarland, 2004: 1277; Also see Fligstein, 2001: 105-125). Thus, "whereas the breach emphasizes deconstruction and usually offers only vague prognoses, the

redress stage is characterized by debate" (McFarland, 2004: 1277) or intense interaction between the parties. For instance, when the state is faced with an uprising, the first response is to counter-attack "the resistance so as to contain the breach". The second reaction is to pull participants back into the given state of affairs. The protestors, on the other hand, counter-attack the state's claims, trying to convince more people to their side. Because of this interaction, "the stage of redress is characterized by contestation and alignment" strategies (Mcfarland, 2004: 1277). During fieldwork observations and interviews, as underlined by McFarland I have also realized "that every type of *frame-alignment strategy* has an opposite form of 'frame contestation'" (McFarland, 2004: 1277). Therefore, how the parties have perceived the opportunities and what kinds of framing strategies they have employed are of critical importance in understanding the nature of the interaction taking place at this phase and the consequences it bears.

When parties start interpreting the events from a common "framework (whether old, altered or new) and gesture their acceptance of the situation", they both begin proceeding in a collaborative mode (McFarland, 2004: 1291). As such, resolutions to social dramas are achieved via "micro-rituals of acceptance and outward displays of agreement that bring the debate to a close" (McFarland, 2004: 1291) as is the case in Egypt. Yet, the final episode does not only consist of reintegration -"though the scope and range of its relational field will have altered, the number of its ports will be different, and their size and influence will have changed"- but also the recognition of an irremediable "breach between the contesting parties, sometimes leading to their spatial separation" (Turner, 1980: 151.). In other words, as McFarland (2004: 1254) states, "the drama reaches a final stage where participants either reintegrate the situation or recognize that an irreparable schism [as it is the case in Syria] or a state of dissonance exists between the contesting parties" (Also see Turner, 1974: 41-2). In this regard, Turner (1980: 152) argues that:

> Redressive procedures may break down, with reversion to crisis. Traditional machinery of conciliation or coercion may prove inadequate to cope with new types of issues and problems and new roles and statutes. And of course, reconciliation may only seem to have been achieved in phase four, with real conflicts glassed over but not resolved. Moreover, at certain historical junctures, in large-scale complex societies, redress may be through rebellion,

> or even revolution, if the societal value consensus has broken down and new unprecedented roles, relationships and classes have emerged.

In fact, social dramas have at least four states of resolution. Different forms of these resolution models (reproduction, negotiation, revolution and schism) are basically defined by "who accepts which redress and how" (McFarland, 2004: 1291).[27] Each of these outcomes "is the cumulative result" of the type of "breach, degrees of crisis, forms of redress and rituals of acceptance that bring the conflict to a close" (McFarland, 2004: 1291). That is to say, the social and political context/structure in which the breach emerges, the form of interaction between parties and the strategies that they employ are all among the factors that determine the result.

With that in mind, this work analyzes the process of interaction –from a general point of view- during the upheavals in Egypt and Syria that "follows incipient acts of resistance and, in particular, dramatic episodes" in which "actors make strategic attempts" to alter interpretations of the situation (McFarland, 2004: 1250). The study also illustrates that dramatic stages of protest, as Turner (1974) describes, "are not chaotic, but ordered - processes and that many are social dramas with a recognizable story or narrative structure" (as cited in McFarland, 2004: 1250). Drawing from Turner, McFarland (2004: 1250) states, "while this narrative structure partly defines stage-appropriate behaviors, the drama's progression is ultimately reliant on the definitional claims actors successfully impose on the evolving social situation". Thus, this study proposes that protesting "is a structured process that is variably enacted through the *strategic framing* efforts of actors" which is directly based on perceived political opportunities (McFarland, 2004: 1250).[28] Drawing from McFarland (2004), this work views the acts of protest "as a type of nonconformist behavior that questions the legitimacy" of the current social and political order. These acts contest "the definition of the situation and, in more dramatic instances; attempt to replace it through appeals to a different normative or cognitive framework

[27] In *Schism and Continuity*, Turner (1957) argues that "in Ndembu society when conflict emerges from the opposed interests and claims of protagonists arguing under a single social principle, say, descent from a common ancestress, judicial institutions can be invoked to meet the crisis, for a rational attempt can be made to adjust claims that are similarly based. But when claims are advanced under different social principles, which are inconsistent with one another even to the point of mutual contradiction, there can be no rational settlement" (as cited in Turner, 1980: 155).
[28] For more details see Giddens (1986) and Sewell (1992).

of interaction" (McFarland, 2004: 1251). Therefore, each stage of the respective Egyptian and Syrian social dramas is going to be treated with regards to political opportunities and framing strategies.

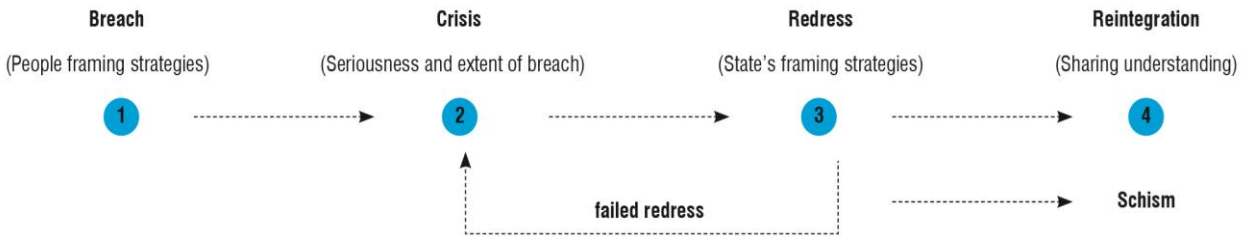

Figure 1. Phases of a social drama[29]

In short, the concept of 'Social Drama' will be adopted as the 'larger game at play' in reference to the political and social transformations in Egypt and Syria. Indeed, within this social drama framework we need to identify at least two contesting/interacting parties as can be found in contentious politics. In the two cases investigated here, the 'state' with its various agencies[30] (members of the system) and the 'protestors' (social and political oppositional movements/challengers) will be the two main parties. In this sense, it is necessary to investigate how the relations between these parties have developed over time (before and during the uprisings). It is also vital to analyze how these actors have been perceiving not only each other but also the political and social atmosphere (context) surrounding them. Therefore, while focusing on the micro level guide posts in the stages of the social drama process, I will take into account the main paradigms of political process and framing approaches from the social movement literature. As a matter of fact, the relevant literature and my personal observations in the field demonstrate that the perceptions, beliefs, emotions and windows of opportunity (both the formal and informal aspects of the structure and the actor's strategies i.e. framing) are of great importance, playing significant roles in not only overcoming the problem of collective action at the outset of the process but also in employing the correct strategies during the

[29] I have borrowed the idea of this graph from McFarland (2004: 1255).
[30] According to Migdal (1988: 19), the state is an organization "composed of numerous agencies, led and coordinated by the state's leadership that has the ability to make and implement binding rules for all people as well as to set the parameters of rulemaking for other social organizations in a given territory, using force if necessary".

subsequent phases (Also see Pearlman, 2013; Benski & Langman, 2013). For that reason, it is obvious that a researcher dealing with these countries within the context of state-society relations needs to employ a more comprehensive and detailed conceptual/theoretical framework while exploring the micro dynamics of social and political events in the specific countries currently under investigation.

Therefore, 'political process' and 'framing' approaches are at work and determine the whole process of the 'Social Drama' from the very beginning to the ultimate episode. Analyzing the "political context that mediates structural conflicts given as latent political potentials" first necessitates me to seek assistance from the notion of political opportunity structure (Kriesi, 1995: 167). At this stage we should remember the point raised by McAdam (1982) that the crucial contention of the political process approach is that social processes have impacts on social protest through "a restructuring of existing power relations" (Kriesi, 1995: 167).

2.3 State and the Social Movements

As Jenkins and Kladermans argue (1995: 4), "political opportunities are central to the emergence and development of social movements" and that these opportunities "are primarily structured by the organization of the state, the cohesion and alignment among political elites and the structure".[31] Hence, without evaluating the nature of the state in the two countries the analyses at hand would be incomplete. In the same vein, it is pointed out by Alimi and Meyer (2011: 477) that "for analysts concerned with understanding the emergence, development and outcomes of unrest, it makes sense to start by paying attention to the states that are challenged".[32]

The 'state' is central in modern societies, and it is also important to the strategies and outcomes of collective action (Jenkins & Klandermans, 1995; della Porta, 1995; Tarrow, 1996).[33] Yet, the social movements tended to be studied chiefly by

[31] Also see the next chapter in this book.
[32] It should be noted that paying attention to the 'state' means "taking care to assess the unity of ruling coalition and the opportunities for defection or exist available to those within it".
[33] Indeed Tarrow's overall body of work focuses on the relationship between institutionalized political systems and social movements. Actually the state is at the center of the political process paradigm, which was developed mainly by Tilly, McAdam, and Tarrow. Tilly (1995) and Tarrow (1993) have forcefully argued that social movements emerged in the nineteenth century as a result of the centralization of states and have taken the states as their targets.

sociologists whose focus was on the motivations and organization of social movements[34] as collective behavior until the late 1980s.[35] Since "sociologists treated the state and political institutions as epiphenomenal, the character of social movements as political action directed toward states and established political actors was relatively neglected" (Rootes, 1999: 1). In comparison to sociologists, political scientists have neglected the study of social movements because they largely focused on those who hold power rather than studying their challengers (Jenkins, 1995: 15-17). In other words, "social movements, in the early stages of their development, often appear too marginal to be worthy of much attention" by political scientists (Rootes, 1999: 1). Yet more recently, a sort of convergence between the perspectives of sociologists and political scientists has been witnessed. One consequence of this recent convergence is the ever-increasing popularity of the term 'political opportunity structure.'

2.3.1 A Brief Review of Political Opportunity Structure

Studies that emphasize the interaction of a social movement with its context have accumulated within the 'political opportunity' or 'political process tradition' over the past three decades (McAdam, 1982; Skocpol, 1979; Tilly et al, 1975; Kitschelt, 1986; Eisenger, 1973; Tarrow, 1991).[36] As McAdam et al (2009: 266) indicates, "American scholars were the first to develop a political-structural approach to movements centering on several versions of the concept that has come to be known as political opportunity structure". Tilly, McAdam, Tarrow, Eisinger, and most recently Amenta (2006) "saw collective action as both a response to and an influence on institutional politics" (McAdam et al, 2009: 266).

The key argument from the political opportunity perspective is that being able to advance particular claims, mobilizing supporters and affecting influence are 'context dependent'. In other words, "social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the context in which

[34] By social movement, I mean Tilly's conception of "sustained series of interaction between a challenging group and the state" (1984: 306).
[35] 'Collective actors' are the ones who are excluded or marginalized in the political order in a general understanding.
[36] Skocpol (1979) created a strong structural macro-analysis with one foot in Marxian class inquiry and another in Weberian state analysis.

they are embedded" (McAdam et al, 1996: 2-3). As Meyer (2004: 126) points out, "analysts therefore appropriately direct much of their attention to the world outside" of social movements,

> on the premise that exogenous factors enhance or inhibit a social movement's prospects for a) mobilizing, b) advancing particular claims rather than others, c) cultivating some alliances rather than others, d) employing particular political strategies and tactics rather than others and e) affecting mainstream institutional politics and policy.

Perhaps the first systematic study of the impact of the political context, and probably "the most widely cited work to employ the concept, is Kitschelt's article (1986) on anti-nuclear movements in France, West Germany, Sweden and the U.S" (Rootes: 1999: 2).[37] As cited in Rootes (1999: 2), Kitschelt (1986) argued that "political opportunity structures function as filters between the mobilization of the movement and its choice of strategies and its capacity to change the social environment". The important properties "of these political opportunity structures are the 'openness' or 'closedness' of states" and "the strength or weakness of their capacities to deliver the effective implementation of policies once they are decided" (Rootes, 1999: 2; Also see Kriesi, 1995: 167-198; Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 278). Kitschelt's comparative approach "develops a clear account of the impact of state structures upon political challengers and a clear focus upon that relatively neglected dimension in writing about social movements -the state". Rootes (1999: 2) rightly puts that "the promise of Kitshelt's work appeared to fulfill was to bring the state back in and to place it at the center of comparative studies of social movements".[38]

Eisinger's (1973) effort to explain why some American cities witnessed extensive riots over race and poverty during the late 1960s while others did not has been considered as the first study in which the explicit use of a 'political opportunity' framework has been seen. Eisinger (1973) focused on the openness of urban

[37] His being the "first systematic study of the impact of the political context on the fate of a social movement, Kitshelt has shown how the impact of the anti-nuclear movement varied according to specific characteristics of the political context of the countries he studied".
[38] This appeared at a time when American social scientists were increasingly interested in comparative analyses and were rediscovering the state. With the regards to this discussion also see Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol (1985).

governments to more conventional political inputs. Since the first use of the political opportunity framework, the concept has been elaborated on by many scholars like Tarrow, Tilly, McAdam and Kitshelt, among others. For instance, Tilly (1975) built upon Eisenger's work "to offer the beginnings of a more comprehensive theory, suggesting comparisons and recognizing changes in opportunities over time" (Meyer, 2004: 129). Like Eisenger (1973: 28), "he contends the frequency of protests bears a curvilinear relationship with political openness". In Meyer's words, "the ongoing interactions between challengers and the world around them determine not only the immediate outcomes of a social protest but also its development and potential influence over time" (2004: 125).[39]

As cited in Meyer (2004: 129), taken together, Tilly and Eisenger offered "models for cross sectional comparisons and longitudinal studies".[40] Again in Meyer's words Eisenger's "specification of opportunities focuses on formal institutional rules to explain the frequency of riots. In contrast, Tilly's broader approach considers a wider range of variables to explain the range of expressions of popular politics over a long period" (2004: 130). At any rate, it is widely acknowledged that they set out a variety of conceptual possibilities for succeeding scholars (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). In particular, "Tilly's articulation of a broader approach to social movements encouraged scholars to use related approaches to examine particular cases and develop a more comprehensive theory" (Meyer, 2004: 129). Then the literature has witnessed "both broader and more restrictive conceptualizations of political opportunity theory" (Meyer, 2004: 129). Apparently, Tarrow (1983, 1991), distinguishes four main aspects of political opportunity structure, 1) the openness or closedness of the polity, 2) stability or instability of political alignments, 3) presence or absence of allies or support groups, and 4) divisions within the elite and its tolerance or intolerance of protest.[41] Similarly, four variables articulated in McAdam's (1996: 1-20) conception of political opportunity structures are 1) increasing popular access to the political system, 2) divisions within the elite, 3) the availability of elite alliances and 4) diminishing state repression.

[39] For instance, there is a huge accumulation of experience in Egypt; see Variel (2011: 27-42).
[40] Also see Jenkins (1995: 34).
[41] As originally defined by Tarrow (1983) the concept has three dimensions. In his more recent conceptualization he adds a fourth element (Tarrow, 1991: 34-36).

Analysts also identify certain other "factors as elements of opportunity depending on the sorts of movements they address and the questions they pose" (Meyer, 2004: 134).[42] In that sense Meyer (2004: 134-135) summarizes this in his article, which can also be considered an overview of political opportunities, as follows:

> Analysts seeking to explain how and why seemingly similar movements differ develop more restrictive models of political opportunity that they emphasize stable aspects of government (following Eisenger 1973, Kitschelt 1986), essentially holding them constant for cross-sectional comparisons. Scholars who conduct longitudinal studies to explain the stages and cycles of social protest movements (following McAdam 1982, Tarrow 1989) tend to focus on more volatile aspects of political opportunity, such as public policy and political alignments, and to employ an elaborated conception of opportunity that considers a broad range of conjectural and issue-specific factors.[43]

At this point it should be noted that Tarrow (1991) and Kriesi (1995) have contributed to the discussions on "political opportunity structures by distinguishing between the formal institutional structure of the state, the informal procedures and prevailing strategies used to deal with challengers and the configuration of power and alliances" (Rootes: 1999: 5). Yet, although this is better than Kitschelt's conceptualization, as Rootes (1999: 5) argues:

> It is nevertheless the case that the further one moves away from the formal institutional structure, the further behind one leaves the genuinely structural, and the more one is in the realm of arrangements which are essentially contingent and relatively unstable over time, and it is simply confusing to describe such contingent constellations as structures.

Accordingly, in order "to examine the exogenous factors that could affect the development of a social movement", scholars add new significant variables to the case under examination (Meyer, 2004: 135). Some of the aspects of opportunity structures which have been considered independent variables are: a) The

[42] See the table for different studies on this issue at Meyer (2004: 133); and for a general discussion on the stable and volatile variables see the table at Gamson & Meyer (1996: 281).
[43] For general discussions see Gamson & Meyer (1996).

organizations of previous challengers (Minkoff, 1997; Meyer & Whitter, 1994) b) The openness and ideological positions of political parties (Amenta & Zylan, 1991; Rucht, 1996) c) Changes in public policy (Meyer 2005) d) International alliances and the constraints on state policy (Meyer, 2003) e) State capacity (Kitschelt, 1986) f) The geographic scope and repressive capacity of governments (Boudreau, 1996; Brockett, 1991; Schock 1999) g) The activities of countermovement opponents (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Andrews, 2002; Rohlinger, 2002) h) The potential activists' perceptions of political opportunity (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Kurzman, 1996). With this in mind, it is clear that "opportunity variables are often not disproved, refined, or replaced but simply added" (Meyer, 2004: 135).

Some argue that "the extent of variation in both concept and use is both completely understandable and extremely frustrating." As for Meyer (2004: 135), "it is understandable because different things are relevant to different movements and to answering different questions. It is frustrating because analysts talk past each other in answering their own questions, missing opportunities to build larger understanding".

All in all, "the political opportunity or political process approach to social movements has gained increasing prominence" over the past three decades by providing a systemic method through which "to examine how social movements respond to, and affect, the world around them" (Meyer, 2004: 141). Yet, the body of research still contains contradictions and confusion since it is "frequently and broadly conceptualized but narrowly operationalized" (Meyer, 2004: 141). In that sense, McAdam (1996: 24) "considers the concept of political opportunities a welcome addition, but warns the concept is dangerous if used to explain too much".[44] In the same vein, Gamson and Meyer (1996: 275) argue that if "used to explain too much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all". Meyer (2004: 141) proposes three strategies that may allow scholars to address these challenges:

> All follow from the initial, often-forgotten insight that the impact of openness on protest movement is curvilinear. First, analysts must explicitly disaggregate and specify the outcomes political opportunities are meant to explain,

[44] McAdam (1996: 24-31) also addresses "three issues in the study of political opportunities. Differentiating political opportunities from other facilitative conditions", specifying the dimensions of political opportunity and specifying the relevant dependent variable.

identifying and comparing potentially discrepant outcomes among different outcomes and different sorts of movements. Second, we will benefit from explicit comparisons across different contexts, paying particular attention to the coalitions of actors engaged in social protest. Finally, we need to adopt a process oriented approach to political opportunities that explicitly examines how they work and how the responses that social movements provoke or inspire alter the grounds on which they can mobilize.

2.3.2 Integrating Culture into the Equation

The political opportunities and resource mobilization of a social movement do not automatically guarantee its success or failure. Different factors are supposed to be taken into account particularly in authoritarian regimes. We are not talking about pre-existing context and stable opportunities. Building on Middle Eastern and North African cases, Beinin and Variel's (2011: 7) edited volume reveals "a variety of ways and contexts in which a more processual, dynamic, and historicized approach to social movements, mobilization, and contestation can be developed", by evaluating the emergence of collective action in hostile and repressive contexts. With regards to this, had it not been for the initial incident that sparked the protests in Tunisia; perhaps the necessary mobilization would have never taken place. Or had people not been psychologically frustrated to such an extent in the recent period, perhaps they would have never found the courage to revolt.[45] It can be argued that a pure political process theory is not valid anymore. Indeed, some of the founders of the theory, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) delivered a fine eulogy in *Dynamics of Contention* and indeed "many in the field have taken a culturalist turn in a deliberate departure from the dominant structuralist tradition in the social movement field…" (McAdam et al, 2009: 260). In the same vein; McAdam et al (1996: 2) also propose a "synthetic, comparative perspective on social movements that transcends the limits of any single theoretical approach to the topic". In this regard, Beinin and Variel (2011: 6) also rightly put that "McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's revised conceptual model is far better suited to studying social and political mobilizations and contestations in the Middle East and North Africa than classical social

[45] For an interesting account on the role of bravery -"the ineffable but potentially influential desire to engage in risky protest"- within the Arab Spring context particularly see Kurzman (2012: 377-390).

movement theories".[46] Particularly, "the emphasis on the shared meanings and definitions that guide social movements and revolutions (political opportunities and mobilizing structures approaches neglect these) brings culture to the table" (McAdam et all, 1996: 5-6). Then, in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis, this can be added as another strategy to the ones Meyer (2004: 141) had proposed above. Here, it should be taken into consideration that the frame alignment theories, as "they fill the gap left by the theories of political opportunity structures and resource mobilization in social movement literature", emphasize the *constructed nature* of opportunities and resources as well as the effects of culture (Uysal, 2003: 5).[47] Hence, even the strategies and methods implemented by the challengers and authorities for framing and counter-framing can be considered as part of the political opportunity structure (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). As Gamson and Meyer (1996: 283) conclude:

> Any objective definition of political opportunity structure explains only a part of social movement opportunity. An opportunity unrecognized is no opportunity at all. There is a component of political opportunity involving the perception of possible change that is a social construction.[48]

Put differently, they argue that in order to make sense, opportunities are supposed to be perceived by potential challengers. Meyer (2003: 20) also underlines that "purely materialist conceptions of political opportunity are inadequate as they neglect the socially constructed elements of opportunities".[49] He proposes that "a comprehensive understanding of the structure of political opportunities then must include both cultural and institutional components that bear some relationship to each other" (Meyer, 2003: 20).

2.3.3 A Brief Review of Framing Analysis

It is widely acknowledged that framing analysis has made a very important contribution to the literature of social movements. Snow, Rochford, Worden and

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[46] In this volume most of the social movements operate in the "interstices of persisting authoritarianisms that subject them varying degrees of coercion and offer them few openings for mobilization".
[47] For a detailed study on this subject see Banaszak (1996).
[48] Also see Kurzman (1996).
[49] In the same vein Beinin and Vairel (2011: 7-8) also argue that the contexts are dynamic and socially constructed rather than "pre-existing".

Benford (1986: 464) describe a 'frame' as "a schemata of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective". They also define frame alignment as "the linkage of individual and social movement organization (SMO) interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values, and beliefs and SMO activities, goals and ideology are congruent and complementary" (Snow et al, 1986: 464). Both social movements and counter-movements frame the events and situations by employing cultural and political symbols available in their cultural toolkit (Uysal, 2003: 5). Drawing from Williams (1995) which symbol is preferred to be used is not a random process of selection but is conditioned by its context.[50] Some scholars like Eyerman and Jamison "concluded that all movements construct meanings and began to see meaning construction as a movement's primary function" (as cited in McAdam et al, 2009: 269). Thanks to the contribution of Snow and his collaborators' various works "on the frontier of culture and social psychology", 'framing work' has come to be seen as one of the major functions of social movements (McAdam et al, 2009: 270).

Benford and Snow (2000) put forward the different features of frames which influence the framing processes as follows: 1) Problem identification and attribution of blame: As cited in Uysal (2003: 5), "social movements attempt to define certain situations as a social problem, and sometimes certain groups can be defined as a social problem. When one group defines the other's existence as a social problem, the other may use the same tactic or a different one". 2) Flexibility and rigidity, inclusivity and exclusivity: More inclusive and flexible frames have a better chance of adapting to evolving situations and becoming a master frame (Snow & Benford, 1988: 200). 3) Variation in interpretive scope and influence dependent on cultural context. 4) Resonance:[51] Drawing from Snow and Benford (1988) resonance of a frame could be defined as the "the ability of a certain frame to affect the hearts and minds of the targeted audience" (Uysal, 2003: 5).

[50] Every society has a variety of stories, symbols and histories that make up something of a collective cultural toolbox. Different groups privilege different set of tools, and various interpretations and uses of cultural tools often directly contradict one another.
[51] To effectively popularize its ideology, a social movement must be able to provide clear summations of its ideology that resonate with its target audience.

The framing process is not only critical for actors engaged in claim-making but also for the agents of counter-framing. In that sense, the framing approach in social movements literature treats frames as processes that involve a continuous reconstruction of meaning because of the continuous counter-framing effort of the counter-movements (Benford, 1993). Drawing from Benford (1987), counter-frames can be defined as "attempts to rebut, undermine, or neutralize a person's or group's myths, versions of reality or interpretive framework" (as cited in Uysal, 2003: 9).

In parallel to this drawing on Snow and his colleagues' initial description of framing, McFarland (2004: 1277) relates four ways of frame alignment/contestation, namely, "amplify/dampen, bridge/detach, extend/limit and transform/reverse". At this point, he points out that:

> The analytical distinction of these opposing maneuvers is useful because it highlights the fact that, in a crisis, actors take sides so that, on the one hand, they act as protagonists of their own frame and, on the other, they act as antagonists of other interpretive frames. Thus frame alignment strategies are adopted by protagonists to attract others to one's own frame and contestation strategies are adopted by antagonists to malign a competing frame (McFarland, 2004: 1277).

Then, it is evident that counter-framing efforts have direct impact on movement framing, and thus the perceptions (Benford & Snow: 2000). Benford and Hunt's (2001) study on framing and counter-framing strategies is important here. They discuss various strategies such as 'problem denial', 'counter-attribution', 'counter-prognosis', 'attack on character', and 'movement responses' (*reframing strategies*) (as cited in Uysal, 2003: 9). Included in the latter are 1) ignoring, 2) keying, 3) embracing, 4) distancing and 5) counter-maligning (Also see Bellin, 2005: 35; McFarland, 2004). This categorization provides a convenient starting point to inspect "each strategy in a context that consists of various actors" (as cited in Uysal, 2003: 9), and is disseminated by the mass media.

In conclusion, in light of the latest theoretical insights above, "the impact of state structures and other contextual givens on collective action is never direct and

unmediated. It is always mediated by the perceptions and evaluations of the actors, their adversaries and allies" (Rootes, 1999: 5). As Gamson and Meyer (1996) put it, much depends on how political opportunity structures and actions are framed. In other words "political opportunities are subject to framing processes" (Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 276). As stated previously, Turner also explains that the phases taking place within a social drama are to a large extent contingent upon what can now be identified as the framing strategies being employed in a given situation. As Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 13) have recently proposed, these two approaches [framing and political opportunity] taken together create a system, or an aggregate of interactions "with tremendous power to explain how and why the uprising took place". As they argue, the degree and effectiveness of public mobilization depend very much on the "balance sheet of the costs and benefits, constraints and opportunities- in other words, the POS- and whether these are acted upon collectively rather than as dispersed groups- depending on the degree of framing" (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 13).

2.4 The Explanatory Framework for Egypt and Syria

As explained in the previous section, political opportunity is a complex construct with multiple dimensions. Most of this work is going to refer to the 'political opportunity structure' as a set of independent variables. It should be noted that political opportunity structures are mainly the characteristics of regimes that affect the likely outcomes of actors' possible claims.

I think it is appropriate here to outline some of the fundamental rationales behind the framework I have outlined through an eclectic approach as underlined by Korany and el-Mahdi (2012) and in accordance with Meyer's (2004) suggestions. Although I concede that political opportunity structures are in general more rigid and resistant to change, I propose that in the long-run they are nevertheless open to modifications and may even experience sudden shifts in times of crisis (Beinin & Variel, 2011: 5-7). Therefore, comparing cases in different countries through a longitudinal approach is of great significance as it can potentially demonstrate the transformation of otherwise stagnant political opportunity structures in episodes of 'liminality'. Comparison of case studies provides you "the advantage of having insights into complex pattern of variables at work" (Hinnebuch, 2001: 112). We already know

that the extent of the 'breach' varies according to the strategies employed by the parties involved and the characteristics of the underlying institutional structures. Therefore, I need a framework that in some way allows me to account for how all of these aspects affect the dependent variable.

In that sense, the multiplicity of the factors makes it difficult to accurately assess the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 282-283). Moreover, as della Porta and Rucht (1995: 230) put it, "social movements have many facets and can be viewed from different perspectives". Therefore, first of all, I chose to concentrate on only one dependent variable, and second, to relate it to a narrow set of independent variables.

The potential of organizational characterizations and mobilization are beyond my primary interest in this study. My focus mostly lies instead in the duration of leadership change (composition of the leadership) as measured by a limited set of dimensions. As for the explanation of this dependent variable, I will concentrate mainly on two independent variables and a few of their defining functions. My central aim is to elaborate on an explanatory approach, developing a number of propositions and discussing them in light of my empirical data.

2.4.1 Dependent Variable

Since the "contextual factors are likely to affect various outcomes differently", it is imperative "to separate and specify the different dependent variables that political opportunities" and framing strategies are supposed to explain (Meyer, 2004: 135). As summarized by Meyer (2004: 135), scholars use political process (POS) approach to examine different dependent variables, most commonly including: a) social protest mobilization in general (Tarrow, 1989), b) particular tactics or strategies (Eisenger, 1973), c) formation of organizations and d) influence on state policy (Piven & Cloward, 1977).

When we look at the processes that are being experienced in the countries I am observing, in both countries the protests have ultimately sought to dispose of their existing leaders. While in one case the leader was swiftly forced out of office (in the Egyptian case, President Mubarak was forced to leave office after only 18 days), in

the other case, change has not come about despite extensive efforts, and the country has entered a difficult and unrelenting course (in the Syrian case, President Assad keeps insisting on struggle and has not yet stepped down as of September 2016).

Then, it would seem that in Egypt the parties in question indicated, through different gestures, that they had reached an agreement which resulted in Mubarak's stepping down while the drama in Syria entered the final phase of a schism which is going to be dealt with in detail in chapter VIII. If we accept the removal of Mubarak as a successful outcome, the fact that Assad survived longer than Mubarak can be interpreted as a failure in terms of the movements in question. With regards to this point, various forms of failure or success will also be evaluated in the last chapter.

Therefore, in this study I am going to focus on 'the duration of time between the occurrence of the breach and the likelihood of implementation of the removal of the leader as a policy outcome' in the states under examination. Furthermore '*change*' within the context of this research specifically refers to successfully forcing the leaders to leave their posts. I do not mean to make a normative argument as to the value of this change or whether it is a 'real change' or not (Lynch, 2014: 14-15; Brumberg, 2014: 29-54). In this regard, I identify this 'change' as the ability to impact the policy of the state; hence, I may say that in this study, my dependent variable falls within the scope of the ability to "influence on state policy," which is one of the most common dependent variables in this literature. Ultimately, the removal of a leader is in its essence contingent upon a policy decision taken within the state or among the different state institutions. Put differently, what is being challenged by the protesters is a policy decision that the state has put forward. The decision emerges as a result of internal negotiations and is announced to the public at large through a representative of the state. For example, subsequent to the crisis in the Egyptian case, the relevant state institutions held internal consultations and as a result of the calculations made here, have determined –in coordination with the relevant foreign actors- that Mubarak ought to step down, and announced this decision to the public by the military on behalf of the state ("Egypt's Supreme Council", 2011; Aly, 2012: 41). In the Syrian case as well, again the members of the system -in accordance with indications from foreign actors- continue to adopt a

policy that Assad should stay and are capable of implementing policies that brutally chastise any challengers of this position.

From my point of view, it is not appropriate to concentrate on other sorts of political changes seeing that the change in the present-day Arab world is more about adapting in order to maintain the status quo.[52] Moreover, in spite of the fact that Arab political systems are all being altered, change is coming in a variety of forms/ways and therefore an identical outcome is unlikely. As a result, I will focus solely on the "duration of removal from office" as my dependent variable. Again, an assessment of whether or not these changes are genuine is beyond the scope of this study.

2.4.2 The Independent Variables and the Defining Functions

In the light of what has been elaborated on previously, like Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 13) who mainly focus on Egypt, I propose that "while both political opportunity structure and framing approaches have their limitations, they promise valuable insights when used in tandem with classical approaches of institutional politics (top down politics) to understand and contextualize the upheavals" in Egypt and Syria. With this in mind, in addition to employing political opportunity structure and framing approaches in an eclectic manner, it is clear that I also ought to ascertain independent variables with high explanatory potential. This thesis could also be considered as testing this eclectic approach first applied by Korany and el-Mahdi just to Egypt, by applying a broder context, indeed comparing Egypt and Syria.

Kriesi (1995: 167) proposes to "distinguish three broad sets of properties of a political system: its formal institutional structure, its informal procedures and prevailing strategies with regard to challengers and the configurations of power relevant for the confrontation with these challengers". I also opt to make a formulation based on these 3 properties. Therefore, the independent variables I choose should be able to explain the circumstances that arise from these three properties of the political system that all have determining effects on each other.

[52] What has been happening in the countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya since the overthrow of their leaders is evidence of this.

For Kriesi (1995: 168), the first two sets of properties provide the general setting for mobilization and they "constrain the relevant configurations of power. Together with the general setting, the relevant configuration of power specifies the strategies of the authorities or the members of the system with regard to mobilization". In combination with the general setting, these strategies in turn define:

> a) the extent to which challenging collective actions will be facilitated or repressed by the members of the system b) the chances of success such actions may have and c) the chances of success if no such actions take place, which may be either positive if the government is reform oriented or negative if the government is hostile to the movement (Kriesi, 1995: 168).

Put differently, it seems that the country specific mix of facilitation/repression and possibilities of success/chances of reform is at least in part the outcome of strategic calculations of the authorities. That is to say, it is not exclusively determined by such strategic calculations, however, since the general setting also restricts this country specific mix in a way that is independent of the concrete strategies devised by the authorities (Kriesi, 1995: 168). Finally, this country specific mix determines the set of strategic options available for the mobilization of the challenges to these authorities. It provides the crucial link between the political opportunity structure and the challengers' decision to mobilize or not, their choice of the reform of mobilization, the sequence of events to be organized and the addressee of their campaign (Kriesi, 1995: 168). This also illustrates that a process of continuous interaction and transformation is taking place in addition to the structural differences between countries. Therefore, in order to improve the argument it is clear that one needs to take framing (culture) into account. This is especially so since the political opportunity structures in question are not fixed.

Therefore, my independent variables can be essentially evaluated in two parts. First, the factors that affect the general setting and configuration of power dynamics and second, the strategies that emerge as a result of this initial configuration. In this sense, the openness or closedness of the polity can be viewed as an independent variable that encompasses the general setting and the configuration of power. Here, we could seek assistance from three defining functions that are indicated below. Alongside the openness or closedness of the state, the activities of the state agents

could be viewed as a second independent variable that should be assessed in relation to the first one.

1. The openness or closedness of the polity

- Foundations of institutions and their characteristics
- Stability or instability of political alignments and divisions within the elite
- International alliances and constraints on state policy

2. The activities of countermovement agents (repression and counter-framing)

- Activists' perceptions of political opportunity (beliefs, values, motivations)
- The availability of potential elite alliances (motivations)

2.4.2.1 The Openness or Closedness of the Polity

As discussed earlier, political opportunity structure is "too broad to be useful by itself in helping us to understand what conditions or circumstances produce more or less space for movement action. Any explanatory power comes from the specific variables that are part of it" (Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 282-283). Since I am uncertain about the weight of specific factors in influencing the dependent variable, I first broaden my view of potentially relevant independent variables. Here the independent variables I chose play a very important role. During this study I have premised my choice of independent variables on the postulation that the structure and agents are in a continuous interaction. I make this postulation based on Meyer's (2004) suggestions and the findings of Kriesi (1995) based on research conducted in 4 countries. I should express that the information I obtained from the interviews I have conducted during the drafting stage of this study has also been instructive in guiding me towards these independent variables. I identify the openness or closedness of the polity, which is one of the main independent variables of numerous scholarly works on political opportunity structures, as the setting for both the defining functions and the dependent variable (Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 275-277). I argue that the differences between Egypt and Syria can be explained by the impact of the level of openness which is shaped by multiple functions.

A brief clarification of what is meant by this 'openness or closedness of the polity' is in order. In this sense I will proceed with my analysis by borrowing from Kreisi's

(1995) arguments. In spite of the fact that the concepts/arguments discussed below following Kriesi (1995) are mainly raised with regards to democratic states[53], I will be using them as comparative tools between two authoritarian systems. I maintain that although the states in question are not democratic, a careful comparison using the same concepts may nevertheless yield some insights in assessing their relative openness or closedness.

According to Kriesi (1995) openness refers to the formal access[54] for outsiders [or let's say people at the periphery] to the institutions of the state. As Kriesi elaborates, the degree of formal access [political access to the system] to state can be evaluated with respect to four different functions.

First of all, the degree of formal access is a function of "the degree of concentration of state power" (Kriesi, 1995: 171). He concludes that "the greater the degree of separation of power between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary –that is the more elaborate the checks and balances- the greater the degree of formal access" (Kriesi, 1995: 171). He argues that in political systems with a strong legislature and equally strong judiciary, there are more points of access than the systems with an all-powerful executive (Kriesi, 1995: 171). This argument needs some clarification and qualification in order to be useful for the analysis of social movements in authoritarian systems in the present study. Despite the fact that I am focusing on two authoritarian republics where presidents have enormous authorities and the patronage of other branches of power, it is nevertheless possible to observe that there are some differences with regards to the relative degree of the autonomy other institutions (judiciary, legislature, army, economy, bureaucracy)[55] enjoy in these two countries. Therefore, I am using Kriesi's arguments by slightly modifying their meanings. In other words, since there are more power centers in authoritarian states than in

[53] Kriesi (1995) does not deal with the impact of POS on social movements in general, but rather focus on its effects on a particular form of social movements, in a particular region of the world: the new social movements in Western Europe and North America. His hypotheses are specified for four Western countries, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.
[54] Since we are talking about authoritarian regimes, there is not a huge difference between formal and informal accesses to the polity. Informal access methods used in democratic regimes are sort of entrenched 'formal access' methods in authoritarian regimes.
[55] Since we are talking about authoritarian systems, just focusing on legislative, judicial and executive branches is not enough. We should pay necessary attention to the other institutions which are also among the actors of the power configuration.

democracies, I contend that the separation of power in democracies (between the legislature, judiciary and executive) can be regarded (expanded) in authoritarian ones as the configuration of power between presidency, legislature, judiciary, executive, army, economy, bureaucracy, etc. The presidency's position is of vital importance, yet there are limits to its power as well. The autonomy other institutions enjoy is an especially important factor in that it limits this executive power. The existence of institutions that maintain a level of autonomy can become a factor that prevents, or at least hinders, the implementation of certain policies.

Secondly, "formal access is also a function of the 'coherence' of public administration. The greater the degree of coherence and internal coordination, the more limited is the formal access. Fragmentation and lack of internal coordination multiplies the point of access" (Kriesi, 1995: 171). With regards to this, it can be argued that there has been a lack of coherence among the Egyptian institutions, whereas those of Syria have been acting in absolute coordination. Especially in Egypt during Mubarak's later years, one can observe that there is a latent tension between the army and police and the economic elite. In this sense, the interaction among institutions and elites, how they view each other, and the degree of coherence between them is very important.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the degree of the state's territorial centralization is also another determinant of the degree of formal access (Kriesi, 1995: 171). Kriesi (1995) points out that the greater the degree of decentralization (federalism/multiple point of access), the greater the degree of formal access. Neither Egypt nor Syria have a federal system and their degree of territorial centralization also varies with regards to their demographic, geographic and ruling structures. Considering that belonging to a specific sect is a decisive precondition for recruitment in Syria, it is exceptionally difficult to become a member of the system. Therefore, it could be said that social heterogeneity also affects formal access. Although formal access in Egypt was also subject to restrictions, the diversity among members of the system is incomparable. This is seen in Egypt that figures such as Tariq al-Bishry, a prominent Islamist figure, can be enter the Council of State and people of different identities can rise to important positions within the state institutions. However, in Syria, people of different identities can rise to important positions only subject to the degree of

their loyalty to the regime. As seen here, there is a close correlation between the first and third functions.

Viewed differently, during the years of the pervasive and overwhelming control of the Ba'th regime, there were multiple points of relevant access to the national, regional and local levels in Syria even by other sects (Sunnis). Ba'th offices used to be effective centers for the recruitment of a select group to the system from a diverse society. In a more centralized system in Egypt, there are not enough access points at the local level, whereas the access points in the center (Cairo) are quite diverse. In other words, the main (perhaps only) center of the political system in Egypt is Cairo, where the access points are quite varied (third defining function mentioned above), whereas Damascus is not the only political and economic center in Syria. Localization is much more powerful in Syria (there are different power centers, like Aleppo) than in Egypt particularly due to the importance of the Ba'ath party and its cadres in the rural areas. Yet, here the critical point is that the policies of Bashar al-Assad have started to change this structure in favor of Damascus during his reign over the last ten years. This is seen in that the ruling party in Egypt has never been as strong as the Ba'ath party in Syria in that particular manner. The Ba'ath rural institutions were especially powerful and could help co-opt local elements through these structures. However, this situation has deteriorated to some extent in the last 10 years and the relative level of formal access that existed has also disappeared. In other words, with Bashar al-Assad the Ba'ath party's penetration of society has been debilitated (Hinnebusch, 2012: 106).

Finally, direct institutionalized democratic procedures also provide opportunities for formal access (Kriesi, 1995: 171). Although none of the countries under examination are democratic, it can be argued that Egypt has had a relatively more democratic experience than Syria. This situation somehow engenders 'relatively better functioning' procedures or implications of 'democracy'. In this sense, it is necessary to emphasize that the civil society, as an essence of democracy, has a broader space for maneuvering and action in Egypt (Ibrahim, 2006). It is possible to illustrate this through a number of examples. For instance, though forbidden from politics, Muslim Brotherhood could participate in elections with independent candidates, it was spoken to by the government, it used to enter negotiations from time to time (as in

the 2005 elections) and it can survive effectively in various unions. This suggests the existence of a relatively broader political space and is in fact proof of a kind of political access. At this point I shall state that with regard to the prospects for democratic change, perhaps, among all Arab countries, as also reiterated by T. al-Bishry (personal communication, January 2, 2013), Egypt has the most developed institutional infrastructure (Also see Dessouki, 2008: 81-135). In this regard Arafat (2009: 153) argues that:

> A democratic transition in Egypt could prove less complex than in other Middle Eastern states. Egypt is not going through a nation building process; it is the oldest nation-state in the region; and it has clear boundaries and a strong national identity. Egypt also has well established government institutions.

Moreover, interview data and scholarly works suggest that Egyptians are not unexperienced with democratic practices, for they prevailed during the first half of the 20th century. Indeed, the entire political discourse in the 2000's was flooded with the call for reform, and although little reform seemed to be taking place, there were some critical steps taken by the regime such as constitutional amendments and the monitoring of the election by judges. One can observe that in time, these constraints turned into opportunities. The single most powerful element pushing the regime to democratize were opposition groups, human right organizations[56], non-governmental organizations (unions, foundations, etc.) and persistent pressure coming from the West, particularly the U.S (Rubin, 2006). For example, with the impact of international pressure, judges were allowed to monitor elections, which is directly related to democratic procedures.

During this study, the issue of openness or closedness will not only be referring to whether actors outside of the center have access to politics and government (formal access), but will be evaluated in a more comprehensive manner. Hence, alongside political access, the factors that bind the actors (in other words the elites) together and the relations of the system with the outside world are also closely related to the

[56] Apart from Muslim Brotherhood affiliated organizations, there have been some other influential secular and liberal pro-democracy human right organizations like *Ibn Khaldun* Center for Development Studies led by Prof. Saad Eddin Ibrahim.

relative openness of the system.[57] The strength of the ties that bind the actors inside the system are also closely related to this process. Meyer (2003: 17) argues that assessing opportunity by only looking at national political structures "neglects" the significant role that the international dimension of the issue (alliances, transnational movements) plays in "constraining" both the state and their challengers. At this point he points out that "political institutions are nested in a larger international context and that the tightness or looseness of that nesting affects the range of possible alliances and policy options available within state" (Meyer, 2003: 17).[58] Scholarly works suggest that this international dimension, which "represents a vital overlay to the strategic, mobilizational and ideational dynamics inside each Arab country" cannot be neglected (Lynch, 2014: 20). Carefully defining the impact of foreign policy is of great importantce since it may constitute a two-fold impact on the state agents and challengers. As it is indicated before hand, international dimension of the issue may constrain the ability of the authorities to tackle with the challengers or provide opportunities to the opposing groups directly. Yet, it should not be neglected that foreign policy issues might also be indirectly used or exploited by the authoritarian regimes to silence their opponents by prioritizing the nationalism over domestic disputes or grievances.

This structural context represents relatively stable conditions and factors that favor or restrict the activities of the major actors, such as governments, parties, interest groups and social movements (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). These conditions can hardly be changed by a single actor within a short period of time, yet this does not mean they are never subject to change (della Porta & Ructh, 1995: 234; Kriesi, 1995: 168).

I assume that the openness or closedness of the polity has a direct impact on social movements' and states' structures and actions through the mediation of defining functions (1, 2 and 3). Basically, the first discussion of variables that deal with the different characteristics of the state constitutes a solid ground on which to build the analyses. In structural terms, as underlined by Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012), one has to take into account the differences between state

[57] These themes/concepts are going to be deconstructed in the upcoming chapters.
[58] For a detailed discussion on the foreign policies of Arab States see the seminal work by Korany & Dessouki (1991).

formations and the differences between societies, which both have the determining power to shape the strategies and responses of the parties during the interaction.[59] Thus, the variables can roughly be divided between structure and process. Nonetheless, I shall underline that there is not a clear-cut division between the structure and the process. Political opportunity structures may gradually change in time because of the interaction between the state and the challengers as a result of cumulative attempts. It is important to note one more time that as for Gamson and Meyer (1996) the political opportunity variables should be considered in a very wide range of options –from the very *volatile* (e.g. public opinion) to the more *stable* (institutional structures).

2.4.2.2 Informal Procedural and Prevailing Strategies:

The Activities of Countermovement Agents (Repression and Counter-Framing)

Informal procedures are the strategies that the authority adopts against the opposition outside of the institutional structures. These strategies are in fact also closely related to the openness or closedness of the institutional structure. What is more, one can observe these informal strategies being implemented from past to present as they are part of a long tradition.

Kriesi (1995: 173) points out that we should be aware of the distinction between the formal institutional structure and the informal ways it is typically applied. Drawing from Scharpf, he also talks about the concept of the *dominant strategy* "to characterize the informal promises of procedure, the shared implicit or explicit understandings that emerge from the political process and guide actions of the authorities" (Kriesi, 1995: 173). As he notes "the informal procedures and prevailing strategies with respect to challengers are either exclusive (repressive, confrontative, polarizing) or integrative (facilitative, cooperative, assimilative)" (Kriesi, 1995: 174). It is important to note that such procedures have a long tradition in a given country. Again, by referring to Scharpf, he argues that "they develop a powerful logic of their own" and "efforts to change them are up against all the sunk costs of institutional commitments supporting them" (Kriesi, 1995: 174). The process should be evaluated

[59] Prof. Baghat Korany, a prominent political scientist from American University in Cairo, particularly emphasized this point in his interview.

in a comprehensive manner. Here the term ‘strategies’ corresponds to the strategies employed by the authorities during and subsequent to the breach as explained above. Therefore, the structure and the process are not distinguishable in a clear-cut way but rather affect one another. Hence, the authorities may wish to employ traditional strategies with a more intense rhetoric in moments of crisis (Kriesi, 1995: 173).

Timing and sequence are of great importance regarding the protest process (Lynch, 2014: 2-20). Therefore, by deploying the second independent and the other related functions in my cases, I will focus on the interaction between parties during the uprisings in order to make sense of the dynamics of the ‘actual’ process in which the responses of the parties, framing and counter-framing are the main points to be examined. In each case, both the protesters and the regimes struggle to frame whether the demonstrators are terrorists or peaceful democracy protesters in a continuous strategic interaction and framing battle around international intervention (Lynch, 2014: 21).

Accordingly, I identify the activities of the state agents or countermovement activities as being related to cultural resources that influence the beliefs, motivations and ideas of both the opponents and allies as the second independent variable. Gamson and Meyer (1996: 279) point out that “opportunity has a strong cultural component and we miss something important when we limit our attention to variance in political institutions and the relationships among political actors”. Hence, I define the cultural resources as worldviews, values, frames, symbols and motivations (della Porta & Rucht, 1995: 234). I expect this factor to also have a direct and indirect impact on the dependent variable through the defining functions (4, 5). It should be noted that whether or not this factor has an explanatory power depends -to some extent- on the first independent variable. In other words, I shall propose that the attitudes and activities of the countermovement agents are shaped and determined depending on the level of openness or closedness. According to some scholars, there is a sustained relationship between institutions and culture. For Gamson and Meyer (1996: 282), for instance, “a strong or weak state tradition, for instance is reflected in political institutions that limit the authority of the executive branch…”. The success of the protests in Tunisia provided the necessary courage for the people in the other countries (Lynch, 2014: 18). In other words, what happened in Tunisia caused people

to think ‘why not’, meaning that the perception of what was possible had changed and matured enough to create mobilization. In that sense Kurzman (2012: 378) rightly puts that “how actors changed as they perceived the possibility of protest, how they made meaning of their lives through the act of protesting, or not protesting, during moments of exceptional confusion and stress” should also be taken into account.

Generally speaking, the two countries of Egypt and Syria have some similar characteristics, or at least the general assumption about these two countries anticipate some similarities. As a result, one initially expects them to produce similar results. At the same time, however, the countries also exhibit some differences with regard to their institutional structures, historical trajectories, party systems, governmental constellations, international alliances and the mix of strategies implemented by the regimes. These are related to the defining functions and can thus be expected to have a differential impact on my dependent variable. I identify defining functions, “which are also affecting each other, as shaping the behavior of the state and the social movement through interactive processes” (della Porta & Rucht, 1995: 235). Put another way, policy makers respond to political protests differently in part because responses are filtered through different domestic, international and social contexts that shape different options, costs/benefits and leadership calculations. The contextual differences between Egypt and Syria will be presented in the next chapters.

2.5 Methodological Framework

2.5.1. Why a Comparative Political Analysis?

This research can be categorized within the tradition of comparative political analysis. If we are mainly talking about the state and its interaction with opposition, Jenkins (1995: 33) recommends using a comparative analysis, saying that:

> … our inquiries should be broadly comparative. States constitute distinct systems, making it necessary to treat states as units of observation as well as contexts for study. In order to capture the interaction of states and social movements, it is valuable to have basis for comparison. The number of the cases depends on the argument.

It is also widely acknowledged that area studies are most helpful when they compare different political structures. In that sense, as Lichbach and Zuckerman (1997: 4) argue, "comparativists therefore insist that analysis requires explicit comparisons. Because events of global historical significance affect so many countries in so short a period of time, studies of single countries and abstract theorizing are woefully inadequate to capture epoch shaping developments". That's to say, comparative studies enable researchers to gain a greater understanding of the political and social processes and "enrich the field for its future practitioners" (Chilcote, 1994: 15). As Wiarda underlines, "comparative politics is particularly interested in exploring patterns, processes and regularities among political systems. It looks for trends, for changes of patterns and tries to develop general propositions or hypotheses that describe and explain these trends" (cited in Stacher, 2007: 40). In the same vein, As McAdam et al indicate, the early work in social movement literature used to explain social movements was based on "changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system" (1996: 2). Subsequently, more recent works have sought "to explain cross-national differences in the structure, extent, and success of comparable movements on the basis of differences in the political characteristics of the nation states in which they are embedded" (McAdam et al, 1996: 2-3). Therefore, it should be proposed that comparative political analysis has the power to yield more accurate results when looking at the process of the Arab uprisings where each country had a different experience. Yet, it is acknowledged that Arab uprisings "require a dynamic model of political contention that takes into account the interaction of diverse actors across multiple levels of analysis" (Lynch, 2014: 3). For that reason, Lynch (2014: 3) believes that considerable emphasis should be placed "on the timing, sequence, and pace of events, which all undermine an easy comparative method based on the characteristics of specific cases".

I accept that the limited number of investigated cases does not allow for fruitful generalizations. In response to this problem, I should state that my strategy is not to increase the number of countries by including a cross cultural approach and in turn broaden the scope of analysis, but rather, to conduct and in depth study on the chosen cases from the Arab world. In other words, any possible theoretical contributions, or conclusions that this study would draw will be directed at the scholarship on the

Arab world as the Stacher's (2007) comparison of Egypt and Syria has done. Like him, my main concern is also to try to make a theoretical contribution, if possible, and try to obtain a general understanding of the structure of governance in the Arab world and the states' relations with their respective societies (Stacher, 2007: 41).

2.5.2 Why Compare Egypt and Syria?

Present-day Arab world studies have a diverse tradition of single-country studies, comparative cases and region-wide comparisons. Indeed, single-country[60] and regional studies[61] remain the most common and popular political studies in the Arab world. Apart from the reasons indicated in the introduction chapter as to why I chose to compare Egypt and Syria, there are further reasons for thus doing so. The analysis was limited to two countries for pragmatic reasons as well. I have devoted great interest and effort to understanding these countries for several years and has the background necessary to complete this study.

Further, these two countries are an adequate starting point for cross-national comparisons in the Arab world. When working to understand the Arab world as a whole, Egypt and Syria may be the two most important countries to look at. They are important regionally, have enjoyed a long shared history, including a failed union between 1958 and1961, and both have produced post-populist authoritarian governments. Despite these characteristics, there are a very limited number of comparative studies conducted on these two countries alone.[62] There are a number of accounts that detail the breakup of the Syrian-Egyptian United Arab Republic,[63] but none of them have focused on present-day comparisons, except the works of Stacher (2007, 2012) and Hinnebusch (2000, 2001b). There are a few journal articles or two-

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[60] For insightful works on Syrian and Egyptian politics please see: **Syria:** Quinlivin (1999), Hinnebusch (1990), Heydeman (1999), Hinnebusch (2001), Leverett (2005), Seale (1988), Kienle (1994), Lawson (2009), Zisser (2001), George (2003), Wedeen (1999), Bank (2004), Van Dam (1979, 2011), Stacher (2011), Tabler (2011), Lesch (2012), Sahner (2014). For **Egypt** see Springborg (1982), Waterbury (1983, 1993), Tripp &Owen (1991), Kassem (1999, 2004), Wickham (2002), Abdelrahman (2004), Arafat (2009), Kheir-El-Din (2008), Blaydes (2011), Soliman (2011), Masoud (2011), Korany and el-Mahdi (2012).

[61] Numerous examples exist such as: Ayubi (2000, 2006), Dhillon &Yousef (2009), Hakimian Moshaver (2001), Harrigan & El-Said (2011); Henry & Springborg (2010); Hinnebusch & Ehteshami (2002); Korany, Brynen & Noble (1995, 1998), Norton (1994, 1996); Richard &Waterbury (1996).

[62] There are a number of historical studies such as Poliak (1939). Also, old travel books are prevalent such as Irby (1845).

[63] For example see Kerr (1971) and Gerges (1994).

three chapters in books yet aside from these few comparisons, there is a need for more comparative work to be done. It is worth noting that there are a number of authored and edited works inviting and encouraging comparisons on the region. There are often chapters within these works dedicated to individual case studies, even in the recent ones (Gerges, 2015). In that sense, as Stacher (2007: 39) argued ten years ago, "while all of these works make necessary and useful observations on Egypt and Syria, they are presented in a manner that makes any comparisons implicit. It is through direct comparative studies that similarities and differences can be explicitly unmasked and argued to the rest of the discipline".

2.5.2.1 Egypt and Syria at a Glance

Throughout its history Egypt has been home to many civilizations and has served as a geographic bridge between the eastern and western sections of the Arab world (Tignor, 2002; Marsot, 1985; Petry, 1998; Daly, 1998). Unlike other Arab nations that had attained legal status through the discretion of imperial powers, Egypt, with its 3000-year-old special status as well as an 85 million population, is one the most important states within the Arab world (Starkey, 1998).

Egypt also bears the fruit of a remarkable cultural and intellectual accumulation, due to a manifest population difference between itself and other Arab states as well as to the developments that took place subsequent to Napoleon's reign, which exposed the country to Western civilization a decade earlier than others in the region. Consequently, Egypt has attained the status of a natural leader, becoming the flagship of Arab nationalism, which had become the dominant force in the region, particularly from the early 1950's till the late 1960's (Choueiri, 2000: 179-187).[64] Egypt's status as a leader started to diminish from the 70's onwards and to what extent it still merits such a classification is an open question (Leyla, 2012: 26; Amin, 2011: 14, 159-165; Dawisha, 2003: 252-281; Cook, 2012: 91-107).

Egypt's current republican era first began after the Free Officer's Movement, led by Nasser seized power in 1952 (Dessouki, 2008: 149-177; Roussillon, 1998: 334-393; Cook, 2012: 39-63). The office of the President is especially vested with a lot of

[64] For a brief analysis of the political debates which took place in Egypt between the end of 19th century and 1952 see al-Bishry (2001: 25-52); Cook (2012: 9-38).

authority. Gamal Abdul Nasser, Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak have respectively governed the country.[65] During Mubarak's reign he has been elected to the Presidential position through six referenda all of which were uncontested. Hosni Mubarak, replacing Anwar Sadat who had been killed by a member of the Islamic Jihad on 6 October 1981, was born in 1928 and is from a military background like his predecessors. After having served as the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Air Force as well as briefly serving as Chief of the General Staff, he was assigned to the Vice Presidential post in 1975 (Solecki, 1991; Cook, 2012: 156-157; Fawze, 1994; Basil, 1999).[66]

It can be argued that Mubarak became what Ann Lesch (2012: 18) calls "accidental president" (Also see Arafat, 2009: 138)[67] just after the assassination of Sadat, and declared a state of emergency which he had since renewed every three years.[68] In this period the government jailed thousands of suspected Islamists and broken down on political dissent (Springborg, 1989: 240-245).[69] It should be noted that the proliferation of emergency law and the other measures have given the security apparatus to act free of judicial restraints (Ibrahim, 2007). Although the armed sector of the militant Islamists (Ibrahim, 2004: 1-34) was effectively destroyed by the second half of 1990s, the government continued to severely restrict civil and political liberties, while seeking to enhance its legitimacy polishing its Islamic credentials (el-Avdee, 2009: 235-257).

It has consistently squashed all forms of dissent and backlash (Ibrahim, 2007; Singerman, 2002). It has tried to use frivolous excuses to assimilate, suppress and

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[65] For insights about the Sadat era see: Hinnebusch (1985); Lippman (1989). For comprehensive works on Mubarak era see: Arafat (2009); Tignor (2010: 282-310); Tripp & Owen (1989); Amin (2011); Springborg (1989).

[66] Mubarak has been assaulted 6 times since 1981 the last of which took place in 1995. He is married to half-British Suzanne Mubarak and has two sons.

[67] In the same vein he is characterized as "unexpected" president by Cook (2012: 274).

[68] State of emergency had been used for consolidating the absolute power of the president. It had provided the president to restrain the movement of individuals, search people or place without warrants, tap telephones, monitor and ban publications, forbid meetings, and particularly intern suspects without trial (Lesch, 2012: 19).

[69] In fact, at the very beginning of his term he calmed the public, released political prisoners and encouraged elections. Yet, when he began his second term in 1987 he refused to reform and extended the state of emergency and thus began to be a dictator. In 1988 he threatened saying that "I am in charge and I have the authority to adopt measures… I have all the pieces of the puzzle while you do not" (Lesch; 1989: 100; Amit, 2003).

manipulate (N. Mostafa, personal communication, Deceber 19, 2012) not only the opposition but even the regular people[70] through its police (Hassan, 2012: 124-132) and legal forces (Arafat, 2009: 139). In this regard, Egypt reflects the main characteristics of *the Mukhabarat state* which is a state operating on fear instead of consent (Arafat, 2009: 139; Ghonim, 2012: 1-27). So much so that the Egyptian police has become infamous for its rampant and unparalleled use of torture (Bradley, 2008: 117-146; Hossam, 2005; Amnesty International, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2011, January). Especially in this period, serious socio-economic problems started to occur both in the economy, which could not cope with unstable policies and dependency through foreign debt and interest, and among the Egyptian people who were in effect being crushed under the Mubarak administration (Cook, 2012: 274; Abu Ahmed, 2012: 7).[71] Especially one should stress that during the last 10 years of the Mubarak period, the deep-rooted inter institutional alliances had eventually began to fracture.

Like Egypt, Syria too has been home to many different civilizations and cultures, has served as an important passage between Anatolia and North Africa as a result of its location, has therefore been consistently targeted by prominent powers in the region and is one of the fundamental actors in the region with its 23 million population. Another distinguishing characteristic of the country is that it is situated on a transit route that connects the Mediterranean to Palestine, the Red Sea, Iran and Saudi Arabia (Hopwood, 1988: 1-3).[72] Syria has also benefited, for an extended period, from a serious cultural and intellectual accumulation owing to its ability to reflect

[70] Personal observation in 2005 during the parliamentary and presidential elections confirms this harassment on the streets, demanding bribes from shop owners and minivan drivers and free food from street vendors and restaurant. Increasing police harassment of the people was everywhere.
[71] For A. Musa (personal communication, January 2, 2013) when Hosni Mubarak left the power, fifty percent at least of Egyptians were poor living around or at the poverty line. For N. Mostafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012), "it was a real colonization with Mubarak. We experienced a real decline in the standards of the Egyptians, not only the middle class, all together".
[72] 'Syria' or 'Sham' is both a country and a concept for Arabs. Arabs have used the word 'Sham' meaning north, to describe the region that lies between Egypt and Anatolia. The word 'Syria' is thought to be used by Romans or Ancient Greeks to refer to the same region. Today 'Sham' refers to both the capital and the eponymous Greater Syria region. In fact there are five separate countries in the historical Sham region: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the Gaza and West Bank territories currently occupied by Israel (Palestine).

various religious and cultural treasures as well as being the founding place of Arab nationalism[73], the most important and influential political movement of its time.

United Kingdom and France's ruthless competition over the region in the early 20th century, clearly demonstrates the significance and value of the region (Bıyıklı, 2006: 73-86; Uyar, 2004: 349-355). Like many countries that desired to attain hegemony over the region, these two countries have also contended that attaining hegemony over the region would not be possible without first controlling Syria. [74] As a result contemporary Syria, Palestine and Lebanon have been torn away from the organic historical ties binding each other and have been turned into separate states. Therefore the political and cultural leadership the Sham region has possessed in the Arab world has been severely hindered.

Syria is officially a republic. Although in form it is compatible with democratic regimes, in substance it is an authoritarian one. Though citizens do have the right to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections, it is not possible for the administration to be altered according to the people's will. For example President Hafez al-Assad had been re-elected at five different referendums for all of which he had stood uncontested. Similarly, his son Bashar al-Assad's presidency was also approved during two referendums in July 2000 and May 2007 where he also stood uncontested.

The President, together with senior advisors/elite from military and intelligence services are capable of taking the most fundamental decisions in the political and economic arenas, while being largely exempt from public accountability. Furthermore the country does not condone any political opposition towards the President and has been ruled under state of emergency laws from 1963 till April of 2011. The government has turned torture into a systematically and periodically employed mechanism.[75] At any time it is commonplace for any alleged opposition

[73] Syria is also considered the heart of Arab nationalism. Ba'ath ideology was first conceived in Syria. Many of the intellectual architects of Arab nationalism such as Michel Aflaq are of Syrian origin. See Rabil (2001: 1-15; "Syria and Turkey", 1998; Hinnesbush, 2002: 142).
[74] Seale explains that "it is impossible to keep the Middle East under control without a direct command over Syria" (as cited in Abdullah, 1992: 21).
[75] It is nearly impossible to encounter a Syrian citizen that hasn't been subject to some form of torture save for the circles close to the regime.

member to be charged with being an American or Israeli agent and detained.[76] During this period, like other dictators Hafez al-Assad has given heroic and fiery speeches through which he portrayed the appearance of an unyielding advocate of the Palestinian cause. One should note that parallel to the Alawite establishment gaining control of the Ba'ath regime, relations with neighboring countries have deteriorated, relations with Iran have reached an all-time high due to not only the sectarian kinship but also strategic alliance and the country distanced itself from the West.

Following the death of Hafez al-Assad in June of 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad, who had already started to portray the image of a reform minded leader prior to his father's death, acceded to power. However as will be discussed in greater detailed in oncoming sections, a large section of the society has not experienced significant changes under the Bashar al-Assad period. In fact in an interview conducted before the uprising began, Ali Sadreddine Bayanouni, then the General Secretary of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood indicated that there was not a great deal of difference between Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad periods, while at the same time sketching the fundamental characteristics of the regime:

> Bashar al-Assad has followed his father's path. Firstly people are still being sentenced without a trial. Secondly Article 8 of the Constitution is still in force. … This means that the President is immune from the constitution and all laws. Besides the country is under single-party rule. This party is sovereign over the people. Thirdly genuine elections aren't held in the country. Syrian political life still remains impotent. All the chairs in the national assembly belong to the Ba'ath Party. Therefore there haven't been any changes in this sense under the current Assad period… Both then and now the police ruled over the people. One can only talk about change in the form in which the arrests take place and in the tone of the interrogations. There has also been some moderation in the way prisoners and detainees are treated. However … the policies and general approach of Hafez al-Assad still persists today (Cited in Atınalan, 2010).[77]

[76] On this topic it is also appropriate to remind that rulings are reached with extreme haste, while many defendants are denied legal representation and therefore cases may be settled within seconds.
[77] Furthermore Bayanouni has stressed similar issues during a conversation I shared with him in Istanbul, 2.5 years after this interview.

In short, Bashar al-Assad had been first received with sympathy, had carried significant reforms especially between 2000-2002 and had made future promises. However later years have not witnessed these promises being fulfilled. What is more, the events of the past 4 years have shown that Bashar al-Assad has even surpassed his father.

2.5.3 Data and Data Analysis

It is widely acknowledged among scholars of the Middle East that there are many constraints to data collection when studying the countries of the region due to the political structures of Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes. However, I should confess that it was relatively easy for me to conduct the research for this study due to the atmosphere created by the 'Arab Spring'. In fact, I have enough experience to be able to compare the period prior to the Arab uprisings with the period since the upheavals, in terms of overcoming the difficulties involved in conducting research on the Middle East in general and in Egypt and Syria in particular. As a researcher focusing on this region I used to be confronted with suspicion and distrust when introducing sensitive topics. For instance, despite the fact that I am not a Westerner, I was previously thought to be working in the name of intelligence services while asking questions about Mubarak and the political system in Egypt as part of my fieldworks from 2005 to 2010. However, while conducting the research for this study during the 'Arab Spring' period, it was relatively easier for me to obtain data. The only difficulty that I faced was limited access to the Syrians inside Syria. I tried to overcome this challenge by contacting Syrians living in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. It was time-consuming but necessary in order to produce accurate arguments based on objective data. Some may argue that communicating with Syrians living outside Syria instaed of contacting the ones in Syria introduces some sort of bias. That might be right. I should acknowledge that this brings some limitations to my study. Yet, it should be noted that the Syrians in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan whom I communicated were mainly newcomers with strong ties inside Syria or Syrians who were continuously crossing the border. Actually, eventhough I did not have any other option but to lean on these Syrians due to the insecure conditions inside Syria, I succeded to enter Syria once and I conducted at least 10 interviews there.

It used to be very difficult to find objective, unbiased printed academic material in Arabic on sensitive subjects (authoritarianism, state-society relations and social movements) and to gain access to reasonable individuals interested in my research before the 'Arab Spring'. Most Arab scholars and intellectuals preferred not to discuss their regimes, while "regime-aligned analysts tended to write ideological and pro-government works" (cited in Stacher, 2007: 41). It does not mean that works that upheld the government line never existed, but in small numbers and often of "little utility" (in Stacher's words) in terms of scholarly argumentation. The reason for this was that opposition figures often engaged in polemic criticism of their governments. Yet, these works also misrepresented how authoritarianism varied due to their biased arguments. Both of these two type of tendencies namely the opposition and pro-government analyses were full of cultural and sectarian arguments which were of course misleading. Besides, it goes without saying that there was a ruling tendency in emphasizing foreign interference and embracing conspiracy theories. This has always been a problem in the Middle East, including Turkey. After the Arab uprisings, these challenges still exist, but it is now much less difficult to conduct relatively objective research. As a researcher of Middle Eastern politics, I also faced some of these obstacles in the context of this research, but through the deliberate and careful selection of the available material and informants, I believe I was able to find evidence to substantiate my arguments and claims much better than in my previous inquiries. I personally observed that these challenges were obscuring the research process less and less while writing this dissertation, since the Arab intelligentsia has begun a process of opening up.

This work, which mainly employs a qualitative method (formal and informal interviews, content analysis, participant observation, ethnographic field work and a review of secondary literature), includes micro, meso, and macro level analyses that put on display the multilateral interactions between different actors. The data from large numbers of interviews is supported by a literature review that includes very recent scholarly works in order to achieve more accurate claims. The main techniques used in this study were formal and informal interview methods. I tried to evaluate both the developments experienced and the discussions held in Egypt and Syria, specifically in the context of the 'Arab Spring', through conducting in-depth interviews with over 60 local informants. Starting south of Turkey's borders, I

conducted interviews with many Syrian and Egyptian academics as well as with retired soldiers, activists, politicians, opinion leaders, and with many ordinary Syrians and Egyptians, mainly in Cairo, Amman, Beirut and Istanbul, during my field trips. In addition to compiling these interviews, this thesis is based on an in-depth analysis of secondary sources, with the help of information collected by participant observation during five different field visits to the region (South East Turkey, some cities in Syria, Amman, Beirut and Cairo) between 2012 and 2015. Over the last three years I have also traveled to the capitals of various European countries, attending meetings and engaging in dialogue with Western scholars and exiled Syrians living abroad.

Therefore, the first-hand knowledge from the field acquired throughout these endeavors constitutes the core of my data collection. By conducting participant observation and focus group meetings and formal/informal interviews, this research attempts to profile the social and political context in both Syria and Egypt since the 1970s in general and in the last decade, including the 'Arab Spring' years, in particular. These first-hand observations have enabled this research to present consistent, reliable, and suitable analyses as well as being a basis for further studies.

2.5.3.1 Printed Materials (English and Arabic)

I continuously accumulated printed material throughout the five years of research and during several series of fieldworks. I collected academic books, journal articles, newspaper articles, human rights reports and international organizations' reports both in English and Arabic on my case studies. I gathered the printed material through different sources including the foreign press (both in English and Arabic), periodicals (data bases) and NGO reports. The main method that I used to collect secondary data was accessing articles on the Internet in the libraries of Bilkent University and Middle East Technical University. I also accessed resources at the Center for Al-Ahram Strategic Studies, Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, Ibn Khaldun Center in Cairo, Center for Alternatives and many bookstores in Amman, Beirut and Cairo. At Bilkent University, I intensively did my research mainly on theoretical work and academic studies on Egypt and Syria. Although this study covers the Syrian and Egyptian dramas, I also read materials on similar countries to be aware of the other

tends appeared in the region. I kept gathering printed material, particularly in Arabic, during my fieldwork in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

I lived in Cairo from November 2012 to January 2013. Then I left Cairo for Amman and Beirut in January 2013, staying two weeks in Amman and a week in Beirut. Since it was impossible to conduct fieldwork inside Syria, I contacted with Syrians living in Turkey along the Syrian border three times in addition to ones living in Amman and Beirut. In spite of the fact that it is almost impossible to conduct field work in Syria as long as the Assad regime survives, I had the chance to visit Tel Abyad in Syria once. Due to domestic sensitivities and political factors, it was easier to conduct research in Amman than Beirut. My first research trip to the Turkish-Syrian border region was in January 2013 for ten days and my second was in February 2013 for a week. My last visit to the cities along the Syrian border was in October 2013 for five days. After almost two years I left again Ankara in December 2014 to make one further research trip to Beirut, Cairo and Amman respectively for a total of two weeks.

2.5.3.2 Interviews (Arabic, English and Turkish) and Participant Observation

While printed material constituted an important pillar of my study, I also relied on interviews with political activists, members of different parliaments, Islamists, writers, academics, diplomats and journalists in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, the US, Switzerland, Denmark and Belgium. My interviews were conducted either in Arabic or in English. Some of my interviews were recorded but some interviewees, particularly Syrians (FSA members, or Syrians frequently entering Syria) asked me not to record their voices due to security concerns, then I just took notes. While referring to the interviews within the text, I preferred to refer to my interviewees with their full names unless they asked me to use a fake name, with only some exceptions in the Syrian case. Since most of the interviewees did not ask for anonymity, I have used their names in my references. However, I preferred not to use the names of those who asked for anonymity.

In Egypt, my colleagues Muhammed Abdul Kader, a researcher at Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, Mustafa Zahran, a journalist at Masryyoon, and Ahmed Zahran, a political activist affiliated with the Baradie Group, provided me with initial

contacts in Egypt and through these initial contacts I connected with others interested in my research. Actually, I was fortunate to have excellent access to sources in Egypt through having previously conducted several fieldworks in Egypt and lived there for almost a year studying Arabic at Cairo University in 2005. Moreover, then Turkey's Ambassador to Cairo, Huseyin Avni Botsalı and the Egyptian Ambassador to Ankara, Abdel Rahman Salahaddin, were also very supportive in terms of putting me in touch with different Egyptian intellectuals during my stay in Cairo. Nadia Mustafa, a political scientist at Cairo University, Mahmud Sherbini, a lawyer and a former member of Vasat Party, and particularly Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the Head of Ibn Kaldun Center were very generous, not only sparing their time to me for their own interviews, but also providing me with more contacts interested in my research. Part of my field research in Egypt was also being visible at public and private events such as political protests in Tahrir Square and Rabia al-Adeviyye Square, academic conferences, lectures and house meetings which usually provided a fruitful environment to networking. Obviously, this sort of networking facilitated the process in terms of gaining both trust and accessing to other people who are ready to share their insights and experiences. Besides this, I tried to visit different neighborhoods in Cairo in order to observe social and developmental inequalities and imbalances. Being a Muslim and Turk was advantageous for me to easily be able to communicate with Egyptians living in suburbs like al-Faysal.

Approaching my initial core contacts and asking for recommendations and guidance was the most efficient method to meet new interviewees. Thus, I also established and expanded my networks in this fashion, as most of the researchers do. It was really efficient to collect the data through such informal techniques. In that sense, informality was key for me to access to the people. Otherwise, if I turned up unknown with the intention of obtaining access to information, it might be a frequent case for me to be blocked or treated in an uncooperative manner. For instance, meeting Tariq al-Bishry, one of the most prominent Arab intellectuals, would not have been possible unless Mahmut Sherbini had generously provided help to me.

In Syria, of course, due to the insecure conditions, it was very difficult for me to access individuals of interest for my study. Conducting fieldwork physically inside Syria was impossible. Hence, instead of conducting research inside Syria, I had to

conduct my research on Syria mainly in South East Turkey, Amman, and Beirut, due to the fact that they host Syrian refugee communities with considerable numbers of Syrians from every segment and level of society including politicians, intellectuals, political activists and academics. The only exception was being in Tel Abyad for a whole day in 2013 (January 31) when the city was under control of the Syrian opposition. It was a unique experience for me to be in Tel Abyad while the civil war was at its peak. I entered Tel Abyad with the help of some of my contacts in the Free Syrian Army and was able to conduct both formal and informal interviews with FSA leaders, tribal sheikhs and regular residents of the town.

As noted above, I conducted three fieldworks in the cities of Turkey, including Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Kilis and Hatay along the Syrian border. At that time of the first two field trips I was the head of an International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) research team dealing with Syrian refugees living in Turkey. This official affiliation provided me with a tremendous amount of access to the refugee camps and thus to the Syrians living in these camps. This research was conducted in January-February 2013. Although the main object was to research Syrian refugees and their situation in Turkey, after getting the necessary permissions from the USAK Scientific Committee, I took those field trips as opportunities to carry out my personal research as well. I formally and informally interviewed many urban refugee Syrians in those cities and more people living in the camps. Moreover, our team conducted a survey of 400 refugees from four camps and I had the opportunity to add a couple of questions related to my research to the survey, which was conducted in person by interviewers in Arabic.

My third field trip was conducted in October 2013. This time I was part of a Brookings Institution research team led by Elizabeth Ferris. With the permission of Beth Ferris, I also conducted my own formal interviews with Syrians during my stay in the field. We also visited the organizations of the Syrian opposition groups located in Gaziantep and Hatay.

While I was in Beirut and Amman (first in January 2013 and the second time in December 2014-January 2015), my initial contacts, Hamzah Ghadban, a Syrian journalist, and Sıddık Bey, the Head of the Yunus Emre Institute in Amman, put me

in touch with several Syrians. In particular, Hamzah's house served me as sort of a center for informal interviews. It was stimulating for me to be in touch with Syrians from different ideological and political backgrounds in Hamzah's front room every single evening during my stay in Amman.

I participated in many conferences and meetings organized by international research centers or by NGOs held in capital cities as well as Istanbul. These events enabled me to connect with Syrian opposition leaders and some Syrian intellectuals. For instance, I met with the well-known Syrian social scientist Bassma Kodmani, the Head of the Arab Reform Initiative, in Copenhagen during a meeting organized by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). I also organized several workshops both in Ankara and Istanbul with the participation of many Egyptians and Syrians between 2010-2015 as an USAK researcher. These meetings also helped me to access individuals of interest for this study. Workshops organized in conjunction with the *Rand Corporation* on April 24, 2013 (Istanbul) and with *Conrad Adenauer Stiftung* on October 27, 2011 (Ankara) could be given as examples.

2.5.3.2.1 Formal interviews

Formal interviews were aimed at political activists, political figures and political specialists/academics/experts as close observers of politics. By political activists and politicians I refer to former politicians, politically motivated activists with diverse backgrounds and opponents of the regimes in question. By political specialist/academics/experts I refer to academics at universities, journalists, political analysts, researchers at research centers and actual and former diplomats and soldiers. I conducted 60 formal interviews of which 30 were with Syrians and rest with Egyptians during my field trips and my visits to several world capitals. In each case 15 formal interviews were with political activists and political figures and 15 others were with political specialists. I tried to balance the impact of the political motivations of the respondents by selecting interviewees from different backgrounds: Secularists, Islamists (Salafist, Sufist, and moderate Islamist), liberals and those from different NGOs representing diverse circles of their societies.

These formal interviews were designed in order to verbalize an analytical framework of what was actually happening in political and societal levels both in Egypt and

Syria based on the interviewee's experiences and personal knowledge (See Appendix III). Each formal interview took between one and one and half hours, and two sets of questions were raised during that time. Initially, before proceeding to the formal questions, I asked personal questions about the interviewee's background and informed him/her about my research in detail. This definitely calmed down the interviewees, lowered their suspicions of me, if there was any, and encouraged them to be more open towards me. Subsequently, during the first set of questions, the interview was guided towards open ended questions about the interviewee's personal views of the political system, and particularly how they perceive the evolution of the system towards the uprisings which began in 2011. Most of the interviewees had witnessed and/or worked on the period between the 1970s and 2011, and while asking the first set of questions I aimed to obtain data only to validate my historical analysis, which relies mainly on the secondary literature. After the initial set of questions, the interview was guided this time towards questions about the details of the crisis process after the uprisings unfolded, the reasons for their participation (or non-participation) in social movements and the changing dynamics of intra-institutional relations. Such open-ended questions allowed the respondents the freedom to give as much detail as needed to clarify and qualify their answers.

Almost every single interviewee was open and their insights, which I really treasure, provided me stories full of information to be able to construct a clear idea of social and political evolutions of the Egyptian and Syrian polities. After completing the first few formal interviewees with political activists, it was necessary to find supplementary research sources for accesing further details to some of the less adequate responses. Then, I conducted formal interviews with political specialists and experienced more informal interviews and interactions with the politicians.

The political specialists were chosen on the basis of their expertise on issues concerning to social and political changes in Egypt and Syria. The questions addressed to the political specialists centered upon the main research questions of the study. Open-ended questions again allowed the respondents the freedom and flexibility to discuss what they personally considered the most important issues regarding the Egyptian and Syrian polities. At this point, special thanks must go to the well-known Egyptian and Syrian scholars I interviewed, including Amr Mousa,

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Bahgat Korany, Ala Eddin Hilal Dessouki, Nadia Mustafa, Burhan Ghailoun, Bassma Kodmani, Yasin Ghadban and Samir al-Taqi. Their insights and knowledge were useful in providing a more nuanced and detached analytical framework of how state-society relations have worked out in both countries. Although this group was not this study's focus, it was necessary to communicate with them for the purpose of general guidance and to benefit from their experience as close observers of the political arena. Besides, in spite of the fact that they were not as politically motivated as the pure political actors and activists, they were also indirect participants in politics: some were even formerly direct players. In the case of revolution and upheavals, particularly in Egypt where the society as a whole was mobilized, these scholars' insights become more important as they become academically-trained participants (citizens). In other words, they further elucidated the formal interviews conducted with political activists.

My objective for the first set of questions was to validate my findings, analyses, and conceptual innovations through interviews with known scholars/intellectuals who have been part of both research and events in Egyptian and Syrian politics. To this extent, I reference the interview data only for validation purposes in the first part of my dissertation. My aim was that such validation would contribute to strengthening my analyses. With regards to the second part of the research, the crisis and redressive action phases, the interview data serves as the most powerful determinant of my arguments and claims, and paved the way for my original contributions. After transcribing the interview responses, I read them all and looked for patterns or themes among the data. I have not used any software data analysis method. Since my interviews were structured, it was relatively easy for me to identify and categorize the main patterns and themes in every single interview.

2.5.3.2.2 Informal interviews and groups meetings

These informal interviews were conducted mainly with political activists, some of whom had previously participated in the formal interviews, and with regular Syrians living in bordering countries, namely Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. This method was a more steady process, but was definitely essential for understanding the reasoning behind action or inaction in terms of mobilization. For instance, as indicated above, I conducted participatory research with Syrians in Turkey three times between 2013-

2014, where I also conducted one hundred semi-structured informal interviews and a survey with more than 400 refugees. The discussions held with Syrians living in Turkey served as the basis for my thinking about the Syrian crisis.

The familiarity that I acquired prior to and during the informal interviews enabled my respondents to be more comfortable and sincere in their responses. These sort of interviews enabled me to access to in-depth information on lesser known activities and relationships between parties. For instance, it was very productive for me to conduct informal interviews with Syrian refugees, since they provided me very detailed and little-known information on happenings on the ground inside Syria. Moreover, by the help of these informal interviews, I was able to grasp a much broader political field in Egypt and Syria, including the formal, academic, and the informal aspects.

These informal interviews also provided an opportunity for me to observe and grasp the negative side of political individualism in these two countries. In that sense, my respondents were also more open about their fears, concerns, and shortcomings, as well as the behind the scenes maneuvering in their societies. For instance, it would be difficult for me to identify the shortcomings of the Syrian opposition forces unless I had conducted informal chats with some opposition members. Therefore, I would say that I found informal interviewing to be a productive method for accumulating data; this was the least problematic of the research techniques I pursued during the research process. Moreover, since I have been involved in this field of study for several years, it was much easier for me to obtain data through informal interviews with people I have known for a long time.

My informal interviews took place whenever an opportunity arose, rather than being subject to pre-planned schedules and time constraints. On some occasions it would last 5 or 10 minutes. I conducted informal interviews not only with people I already knew; I also interviewed some connected individuals in a more spontaneous manner. Let me give two examples of this kind of sudden informal interviews. While I was heading from Yayladağı to Antakya city center along the immediate Syrian border, I came across with a group of Syrian fighters living in Turkey who were waiting for their commander. I spontaneously attempted to chat with them and due to their

friendly approach to Turkey and my very approach to them in Arabic with religious discourse they talked to me for 15 minutes without any hesitation and they also asked me to wait for their commander. After waiting for 10 more minutes I was also able to have a chat with one of the commanders of *Ahrar al-Sham.* Similarly, in Cairo, I dropped by my colleague Mahmut Sherbini's office on Ayn al-Nil street just to say hello one evening, then I realized he was about to leave for a meeting with some young members of Vasat Party. He immediately offered to go to the meeting together. It was a chance for me to collect data through informal interviews with at least 10 young political activists who were actual participants in the Tahrir demonstrations. Since my colleague had taken me to the meeting, I was not presented with any trust problem and they were extremely open to me. So, while it is fair to say that this method is an invaluable research technique for obtaining new data, such data was dependent on the respondent's willingness to co-operate. And this co-operation was dependent on the general political climate, the interviewee's political position and researcher's nationality and background.

In case of research mainly relying on oral data in the form of formal and informal interviews, which are largely based off of the participant's memories and perceptions, it was necessary for me to check and recheck anecdotes to ensure that the events were as accurately portrayed as possible. For example, particularly in the Syrian case, due to extreme political fragmentation, any narrative provided by a respondent (both during a formal or informal interview) was cross-referenced and checked in terms of its accuracy with other respondents to confirm its content. This process might be tiring and time consuming, but it was necessary to ensure that all the oral information in this research is as accurate as possible. In that sense, I have to express my appreciation to my former supervisor Dr. Carole O'Leary for teaching me how to conduct objective ethnographic research in the Middle East during her courses that I took in my Master's studies at the American University in DC.

This is supplemented by the fact that the study has not been limited to physical, face-to-face interviews. In order to incorporate alternative global perspectives into the research, I have also conducted numerous interviews with many individuals around the world via Skype and by telephone. This method has contributed to the research's multidimensional perspective on the crisis in the region.

2.5.3.3 Content Analysis

I conducted a content analysis of the news, opinion columns, official statements of leaders and slogans and statements of opposition groups to study the framing and counter-framing processes among social movements, the media and the state during the uprisings in Egypt and Syria. Since I am also interested in the meanings created by various groups, content analysis serves to understand and explore beliefs and values articulated by the movement, the media and particularly the regime. To understand the framing processes in a broader context, a focus on frame amplification and the use of master frames are of the utmost importance. In order to illustrate how certain values and beliefs have been amplified by both sides in framing struggles, content analysis methods provide important advantages. Moreover, this research also relies on a discourse analysis of the regimes' propaganda materials that has allowed me to map out one of the factors involved in regime survival, particularly in Syria. The importance of these materials is not only seen in their ability to effectively propagate the regime's frames of analysis; they also provide valuable insight into the group's ideological and political stances.

PART I

CHAPTERS III, IV, V

TOWARDS TAKING TO THE STREETS AS A BREACH

CHAPTER III

BREAKDOWN OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SYSTEM

3.1 Political Trajectories / Historical Analysis

For both countries under the examination of this study, assessing the present situation requires a thorough analysis of the basic political/social and economic institutions so that we may understand to what extent these polities took qualitatively different tracks (Misztal & Jenkins, 1995: 326). In this sense, it can be argued that the extent of the interaction between these institutions, the elite forces governing them and the reflexes they have accumulated over time have played an important role if not determined the final outcomes.

The purpose of this section is to provide the historical, political and social contexts within which the parties (state and protestors) are embedded. Although the main focus of this dissertation is placed on the interaction between those parties during the upheavals, a better understanding of the phenomenon requires a consideration of what Marett calls the "social present", along with the political one, which concerns a period of time spanning at least three generations (cited in Yılmaz, 2012: 15). Like Marett, Beinin and Vairel also grant particular importance to the historical dimension in developing an understanding of social and political processes (2011: 8). In other words, considering that the present problems related to unprecedented social and political upheavals both in Egypt and Syria are deeply rooted in the nature and historical evolution of the countries' political and social structures (*possible political opportunity structures*), it is necessary to observe these structures from a historical perspecti

ve (Sahner, 2014: 183; Hassan, 2012: 5; Zubaida, 2012). In the same vein, for instance, Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 15) argue that:

> It would be a mistake to underestimate the impact of the Egyptian revolution[78] by seeing it through the reductivist, mainstream lens of democratic transition without considering the history of contention in the country and the uprising's specific societal context (Also see Cook, 2012: 7).[79]

Indeed, Cook (2012: 275) argues that "Egyptians have been in open revolt against their rulers since Urabi's nationalist uprising in 1882". Likewise, Turner (1980: 150) states that the breach of a social drama is seen as the manifestation of "a deeper division of interest and loyalties than appears on the surface". Put differently, he reiterates:

> Social dramas are in large measure political processes, that is, they involve competition for scarce ends -power, dignity, prestige, honor, purity- by particular means and by the utilization of resources that are also scarce – goods, territory, money, men and women. Ends, means and resources are caught up in an interdependent feedback process. Some kinds of resources, for example, land and money, may be converted into other kinds, for instance, honor and prestige. Or they may be employed to stigmatize rivals and deny theme these ends (Turner, 1980: 152).

Moreover, it should be noted that studies of the state and social movements need to be sensitive to temporal processes (Migdal, 2009: 162-192). It is obvious that the development of movements and their impact is a process that occurs over time. In other words, political or social transformation "is not only occurring but also, though unevenly, both accelerating and cumulative" (Korany, 2010: 3; Yaseen, 2011; Toensing; 2012).

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[78] This study doesn't seek to discuss whether a revolution actually took place or not. Since Egyptians and Syrians prefer calling what had taken place a "revolution" (الثورة), this study will also employ the same term.

[79] At this point Cook (2012) also underlines the importance of history by saying that to grasp the January 25 uprising requires not only a detailed analysis of events in the weeks and months before the upheaval but also of the decades prior to the unrest.

In parallel to the points mentioned above, it is also known that social science has generally experienced a return to historical analysis over the past decade. In Katznelson's words, "scholars have taken to heart the idea that social science and history cannot be constituted meaningfully without each other" (2009: 96). Therefore, it is important to analyze how the institutions and internal balances in each state at hand evolved during their respective republican periods.[80] Furthermore, it is important to note that during the interviews conducted within the context of this study, many individuals have expressed in their answers that the common characteristics of both these institutions and the society within which they exist have to be clearly set out. In fact, whilst expressing their views on opportunities (elements that would motivate mobilization), many of the respondents referred to the characteristics and interaction of different institutions. Hence, it is of the utmost importance to first appreciate and investigate the historical processes that have shaped existing actors in order to fully comprehend what is going on. For instance, Anderson (2011a: 70) states that knowing something about what Egypt was like under the previous presidents (Mubarak, Sadat and Nasser) is crucial to understanding what is currently happening in Egypt. In addition, external relations will also be evaluated in terms of their effect on the state-society equation and the structure of authoritarian systems.

That is to say, what happened during the Arab uprisings in both Egypt and Syria is indeed linked to a variety of institutional, political, economic and socio-cultural problems that date back to the time of the emergence of the new republics and especially to the incipient stages of military revolution in 1952 and 1963 respectively in Egypt and Syria. To specify, not only these two countries but many others in the region have always exhibited a condition of tension between state institutions and the people that is caused by the challenge of incorporating different ethnic, sectarian, economic, religious and political groups into the system, both politically and economically. This fundamental tension has always maintained its salience in the politics of the countries throughout their histories.[81]

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[80] The concept of institutions refers to state structures that contribute to the security and bureaucracy of governance. For instance in the case of Syria, this includes the institutions of the Ba'ath Party, the military, security services and parliament.

[81] For instance for the comparative evolution of political economy of Egypt and Syria see Hinnebusch (2001b: 119-130); For Hudson (1977: ix-x), the legitimacy problem is the result of "a complex set of

In what follows, both of these countries' social and political structures will be described diachronically with a particular emphasis on the relationship between the state (*also among state bodies*) and its citizens, a relationship that seems to have created conditions conducive to uprisings. To fulfill this task, I will not only use the classical authoritarian state approach but also a center-periphery analysis approach which will take into the account the role of stratification and differential incorporation in conflictual relationships between the state and society, most conspicuously seen in the public domain. Following Heper, I use "center" to define "those groups which try to uphold the state's autonomy and supremacy in the polity; [while] 'periphery' refers to those who try to escape from the regulation of state" and desire to place themselves in the center (Heper, 1980: 20). In this sense, it is necessary to note that one of the most basic characterizations of an authoritarian system is:

> an arbitrary and usually a personal government that uses law and the coercive instruments of the state to expedite its own purposes of monopolizing power and denies the political rights and opportunities of all other groups to compete for that power (Jackson & Roseborg, 1982: 23).

Another significant point to stress here is that since many comprehensive studies on these subjects are already to be found in the literature, it would be a waste of time and space to delineate on the matter in great detail. In other words, this first part of the dissertation aims to take into account the existing literature without re-examining the well-known arguments in great depth. Moreover, seeing that Egypt and Syria are among the countries best-covered by political scientists focusing on Middle East politics,[82] there is no need to provide an extensive analysis of their political structures and dynamics, particularly those of the 70s, 80s and 90s. Hence, the main characteristics of the polities in question will mainly be described by referring to the literature without going unnecessary detail. Rather, the main purpose of this section will be to lay the foundations of a study of interaction that will be elaborated upon in

historical, social and cultural conditions, aggravated by imperialism and modernization, which have made it difficult for Arab political systems to achieve consensus on matters of identity".

[82] Particularly Egypt has been the focus of political science research that has introduced methods and concepts into the study of Arab politics. See Springborg and Pelletreau (1998: 23).

greater detail in the subsequent chapters and to describe this foundation within a coherent theoretical framework.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The findings of this study demonstrate that 'state institutions' and their governing 'elite' play an important role in the success or failure of social movements. Therefore, evaluating the basic historical characteristics of these institutions is of critical importance in order to uncover the motivating dynamics behind these elites' decisions and how the interactions between these actors [and institutions] have been shaped over time. While evaluating the cases of Egypt and Syria, these dynamics will be disaggregated and further delineated within the context of 'formal access', which refers to Kriesi's 'openness'.

3.2.1 The Openness or Closedness of the Polity (Formal Access)

As can be remembered from the previous section, the notion of formal access can be briefly described as follows: (1) formal access is a function of the degree of concentration of state power. Thus, exploring the degree of separation between different institutions (the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the military) is instrumental in defining the degree of formal access. In other words, it is necessary to focus on the relationship and interactions among these institutional bodies and their structures. Moreover, (2) formal access is also a function of the coherence of public administration. Fragmentation and lack of internal coordination multiply the points of access. It is particularly during the periods where intra-institutional conflicts of interest become more visible that fragmentation, and thus the lack of coordination, is more tangible. While this on the one hand unravels the dysfunctional predicament of the state, on the other, it offers an opportunity for the mobilization of the society because an opportunity to access the system has presented itself.

(3) Formal access is also a function of the degree of the state's territorial centralization. Additionally, (4) direct institutionalized democratic procedures provide opportunities for formal access. In this context, the existence of domestic actors that somehow have sought to preserve their authority or the existence and implementation -albeit reluctantly- of certain democratic procedures due to outside pressures, are important variables that provide opportunities for the people. It is

therefore important to note here that (5) the relationship of the system with the outside world is closely related to the relative openness of the system.

Therefore, the primary characteristics of the state will be subject to an investigation within these functions listed above using the concept of 'formal access'. These functions, expressed through the concept of formal access, can be evaluated primarily under 3 different topics (defining functions).

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of the subject, it should be noted that the independent variable (*openness and closedness of the polity*) and defining functions which are going to be deployed in this chapter will provide insights to explain the relatively structural/stable part of the phenomena. This means that this aspect of the functions urges or restricts the activities of major actors from a systemic point of view. The defining functions are as follows: 1) Foundation of the institutions and their characteristics; 2) Stability or instability of political alignments and divisions within the elite; 3) International alliances and constraints on state policy.

For Kriesi, the degree of openness or closedness of formal political access is about the institutional structure of the political systems and concerned with the configuration of power among the relevant actors within said system (1995: 168). In fact, this situation is closely related to the extent to which the existing system is open to actors outside the center (inclusive or exclusive) as well as the extent to which the polity is open or closed to the outside world. Of course, as is going to be elaborated upon in the next section, this structural aspect (Aly, 2012: 25)[83] will be one of the main factors determining the role and the influence of the strategies of the parties during the uprisings as well as the perceptions of both sides.

There are some fundamental 'themes' that need to be thoroughly addressed in order to grasp how those three defining functions affect the openness and closedness of the polity. Focusing on the a) co-optation strategies of the regimes, b) the structure of the coercive/judicial apparatuses and c) their interaction with the other institutions, d)

[83] By structural aspect, I mean the socioeconomic and political fundamentals which build and shape states. This particularly refers to the institutional and elite composition of the polities along with their demographic and geographic structures.

how the traditional foreign relations of the states have been arranged and, of course, e) state-economy interaction is crucial for comprehending the processes and properly establishing the causal mechanism. Forasmuch, these "themes" enable us to correctly assess the empirical data, which is a necessity in extensively analyzing the dynamics of tension between the state and the society and how the relationship between the state institutions and elites have been formed over time. It is obvious that these substantial topics are of great importance for analyzing the recent events from a historical and structural perspective which is a necessity to deconstruct the determinative factors.

To comprehend the explanatory potential of our independent variable, we will assess the impact of the defining functions in greater detail below. In fact, when these defining functions are operationalized in our analyses, they may help us discover to what extent a polity is ***relatively*** open or not in terms of formal access.

3.2.1.1 Foundations of Institutions and their Characteristics

The formal institutional structure of the state, state power, position of the leader, the changing structure of power, patrimonial composition, intra-institutional relations (the relations between various branches of the regime such as the presidency, military, intelligence services, etc.), the arrangement and organization of economic actors and their relations with the regime, and the configuration of the party system are some of the key factors that steer the political trajectories of the states that are going to be investigated within the framework of this defining function in a historical manner.[84] As Owen (2000: 37) points out, all relevant actors (the military, parties, bureaucracy and the economic enterprises) have their own "organizational reasons for obtaining resources, influencing policy, and preserving as much as possible of their autonomy" (Also see Lynch 2014: 125-246).

By comparative standards, authoritarian Arab states have been relatively stable. In large part this is because of the system of political and military controls established by these regimes (Posusney, 2005: 1-20). Due to structures of political control over

[84] There are many studies about these subjects but Hinnebusch's chapter in Hakimian (2001) has an extremely eye-opening and stimulating impact particularly on different evolutions of the political economy of Egypt and Syria.

the mass media, military, police, the educational system and strategic sectors of the economy, these states have been largely immune to large-scale disorder and independent opposition (Springborg, 1989: 135-181, 2014; Owen, 2000: 34). Indeed, for Posusney, what makes the Arab states different "is not simply the *phenomenon of enduring authoritarianism* but rather the density of it…" (2005: 2). In these states, there has never been a high degree of legitimacy (Hudson, 1977) and the system has been incomplete and contradictory, creating periodical political explosions which have alternated between reform and, more commonly, repression by the regimes (Brownlee, 2002).[85] However, it is important to note that the stability of these states has been worn out and corroded over time. In this way, it is possible to say that intra-institutional relations and conflicts of interests have made the state impotent, while the fracturing of inter-elite alliances has resulted in increasing mobilization of the people. In fact, the socioeconomic and political structures of a state usually change over time and "when they are not in harmony they lead to cracks in the system", thus implying a kind of political opportunity (Aly, 2012: 25).

In this respect, the aggregate message or the most important contribution of the book edited by Posusney[86] is to "highlight the importance of various institutional arrangements for choices made by political activists and elites who serve to perpetuate authoritarian rule" (2005: 3-4).

3.2.1.1.1 Politicized and Depoliticized Institutions

In the same vein, Stacher (2007: 2) argues that the "depoliticized institutional arenas, as in Egypt, provide a political system greater flexibility than systems with politicized institutions, as in Syria".[87] "By politicized or depoliticized institutions", he is referring to the degree to which "a system's institutions such as the presidency, ruling party of the state and military or security services contribute to politically formulating a governing consensus" (Stacher, 2007: 2).[88] At this point, one should observe that Mubarak's pushing the military outside of politics was to his detriment in the long run. This situation, in time, transformed the military into an institution

[85] For different cases on previous experiences of repression see Brownlee (2002).
[86] This work grew out of a special issue of *Comparative Politics* (January 2004) devoted to analyzing the durability of authoritarianism in the Middle East.
[87] In his work, he mainly compares the institutional state structure of these two states.
[88] For a theoretical background of 'consensus' in Egyptian politics see el-Mikawy (1991).

that considered solely its own interests and encouraged it to start conceiving of an existence separate from Mubarak. In Stacher's words, "despite an abundance of similar institutions in Egypt and Syria, the politicized (de-centralized) or depoliticized (centralized) character of institutions determines a system's ability to co-opt, affirm, and shed established and new elites while also incorporating unaffiliated social actors" (2007: 2).

Hence, according to Stacher's arguments, since the depoliticized nature of institutions enhances the centralization of presidential power, "system adaptability" is higher in Egypt than in Syria. In other words, in Egypt, where institutions are not competing against one another in the political arena, Mubarak could do as he pleased so long as he could appease members of the military in different ways and so long as things went according to plan. Yet in the long run, such conditions end up weakening the alliances between institutions at the ontological level. While this situation ensures that the president can swiftly make decisions in circumstances other than crises, it also allows other institutions to abandon the president with relative ease in moments of crises. This explains why whilst seeming to act in concert with the presidency under normal circumstances, the regime and ruling coalition in Egypt can be reconstructed in a more flexible manner when experiencing a crisis.

On the other hand, Syria's institutional structure reveals that politicized institutions struggle "for influence while blocking changes by other institutionally backed participants" (Stacher, 2007: 4). Hence, the Syrian political structure becomes less able to quickly adapt its system, which means that Syria exhibits a lower degree of adaptability (Stacher, 2007: 12). To put it simply, the politicized nature of the institutions in Syria, being in a certain state of competition with one another, conversely means that action can only be achieved through consensus. Institutions and elites that are already acting with political concerns in mind under normal conditions enter into an existential struggle during times of crisis as they cannot easily dispose of the president that ensures their unity. This reluctance to dispose of the president is somehow related to the fact that these institutions/elite cannot foresee who or which institution will emerge victorious in the ensuing competition (Zisser, 2003: 15-23). Ensuring that the existing president -a president whom they have agreed upon and approved of, 10 years ago, due to different reasons- stays in power

becomes an important undertaking in terms of securing their own existence. In other words, because these institutions require the presidency to maintain a certain status quo between one another, their alliance appears to be more powerful. In Egypt, however, institutions that have kept at a relative distance from political considerations and have instead been fed with different "carrots" (Springborg, 1989: 137-140), can display an anti-government and pro-change attitude when they realize that they may be deprived of these "carrots". From a different point of view, it might be useful to take into account "Waterbury's notion of Egypt's soft state authoritarianism (1985) with a radical hard variant" (Ba'ath ideology) that was "adopted by the Syrian Ba'ath Party following the 1963 coup" (Stacher, 2007: 4). Egypt has a relatively institutionalized state and these institutions are both relatively more powerful and more autonomous in their depoliticized form, hence, the system is self-sufficient. As can be observed with the example of the military, this institution is subordinate to the president but when it deems it necessary to defect, there is an infrastructure in place that allows it to do so. Yet, contrarily, the same is not possible for the competing and politicized institutions in Syria as it is more difficult for them to meet at a common denominator and decide that the president has to step down.

Therefore, the primary parameters that need to be investigated within this defining function are the concentration of state power, the position of the president, the autonomy of institutions or the lack thereof and the effectiveness of democratic procedures. With this in mind, the role of the military, the judiciary, the legislative body and capital must be examined within the authoritarian state structures of Egypt and Syria.

3.2.1.2 Level of Stability or Instability of Political Alignments and Divisions within the Elite

> *The unity of the ruling elite is a critical variable in virtually all political process analyses of social movements and revolutions (Alimi &Meyer, 2011:477)*

Institutions are important political structures, but the continuity of any political system depends on the types of (power) constellations and elites[89] within the institutions that govern (Synder & Mahoney, 1999: 3-32; Slater & Fenner, 2011). In fact, in this sense, it is quite difficult to separate the first defining function from the second, as there is a clear interpenetration/transitivity that permeates these functions with regard to their explanatory power. J. Gandhi underlines this by stating that "by now, it should be evident that dictators do not rule alone. They govern with institutions that are particular to their type" (Gandhi, 2008: 34; Also Stacher, 2011: 20; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007). Scholarly works that explain the durability of authoritarian regimes from institutional or elite power sharing perspectives have recently been gaining attention in the relevant literature (Slater, 2003; Lust-Okar, 2005; Slater, 2006; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007; Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi, 2008; Svolik, 2009; Stacher, 2011). As Stacher states, "institutionally backed elites interact and compete with one another in developing system consensus, which allows or obstructs the ruling elites to govern cohesively, resolve potential problems and react to crises that emerge" (2007: 12). Institutional approach necessitates "the whole range of state institutions that shape how political actors define their interests and that structure their relations of power to other groups" (Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth, 1992: 2). Carothers also calls for attention to be directed to the role played by institutions in political transformations in authoritarian states (2002: 16).[90]

Along these lines, Stacher shows why institutions do in fact matter, even within a system of personal authoritarian rule, and why they may act differently. "How elites in these institutions use, interact and influence other institutions" elicits the differences in regime adaptation and despite similarities between Egyptian and Syrian authoritarianism, due to historical differences in their developments, "different political processes are at work as each state pursues system adaptation" (Stacher, 2007: 13). Egypt and Syria exhibit different levels of institutional politicization, which in turn correlates to the actions of elites. For instance, in terms

[89] By 'elites' I mean the individuals that occupy leadership positions in the state institutions. This would include members of the ruling party, ministers, heads of intelligence agencies, senior military generals. For comprehensive works on Arab elite and their function in ruling the country see Zartman, Tessler, Entelis, Stone, Hinnebusch and Akhavi (1982); Perthes (2004).
[90] Also, for theoretical insights see Snyder and Mahoney, 1999; Ezrow and Frantz, 2011; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Magaloni, 2008; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Svolik, 2009).

of the military and security elite, the level of institutionalization impacts officers' calculations of the potential risks of reforms. As Posusney (2005: 14) points out, "high levels of institutionalization foster the development of soft liners who believe that the military's effectiveness and cohesion are compromised by the holding of the reins of power. Where patrimonialism reigns, however, officers have reason to fear that their positions would be jeopardized by political reforms" (Also see Slater, 2003: 81).[91]

Within the context of this defining function, the coherence of public administration will be the primary topic to be explored. Here, whether and how the relationships among elites have changed over time will be the object under investigation with additional attention paid to how the issue of decentralization is dealt with over time.

3.2.1.2.1 State, Bureaucracy and the Domestic Political Arrangements

Considering the two defining functions laid out above, it can be argued that "it is the internal political dynamics and strategies of the authoritarian regimes themselves" that overwhelmingly determine their own durability and stability (Kassem, 2004: 3). Here, it is important to underline that above all else that the structure of these institutions, the attitudes of the elites and the strategies they pursue determines the composition of the political equation and the support of its social base. Again it is critical to underline that these structures, attitudes and strategies aren't fixed (Owen, 2000: 38). At times, they may be subject to change either voluntarily or involuntarily. During such episodes, while it is possible for the social base to experience changes and for the inter-elite alliances to weaken or gain strength, it is also possible for such changes to provide windows of opportunity for the transition into a more open and democratic polity. Nevertheless, one shouldn't forget to recognize that authoritarian regimes often go out of their way to ensure that such opportunities do not arise. For instance, most authoritarian regimes have allowed limited liberalization, however, the so-called "positive" steps in this direction are "based on concerns with regards to their own self-preservation and were never intended to result in genuine democratization" (Kassem, 2004: 3). In this respect, it is worth noting that when we talk about the Middle East in terms of democracy, it is

[91] In order to understand the transformations taking place today in the Arab world, the role of patrimonial/neo-patrimonial patterns of interaction should also be investigated.

necessary to distinguish the differences between the concepts of liberalization and democratization. Whereas liberalization involves the institutionalization of civil and political freedoms, democratization is more concerned with the degree of citizen participation as well as the accountability and turnover of governing elites (Korany, Brymen & Noble, 1995; Also see Brumberg, 2005). Therefore, as Kassem (2004) demonstrates in her book in detail, political liberalization does not necessarily present a challenge to authoritarian rule because "even though there are international and societal pressures for reducing authoritarian controls, the process of political liberalization is state induced, and the state retains a considerable degree of management over the process" (Mashupouri, 1995: 14).[92] Thus, the process of political liberalization in an authoritarian state is, in other words, generally "artfully contained and controlled so that it cannot pose any challenge to the regime" (Kassem, 2004: 3)[93]

Authoritarian regimes survive on the oppression of individuals and the opinions of its people, thus requiring a mechanism to sporadically release built-up tension. A limited period of controlled liberalization is the best method with which to appease the growing hostility amongst the people without having to confront a unified opposition. During these periods of liberalization, the regime adopts the rhetoric of reform in order to maintain its monopoly over the political discourse. Reform is making changes to an existing system in order to improve it[94] and requires that real changes be made. However, the underlying paradox of the top-down reforms of authoritarian regimes is that they aim to maintain and even strengthen the status quo. Since any democratic reform eventually makes the authoritarian regimes redundant, the ruling elite aim to control the process of liberalization. These limited and temporary changes implemented by the regime aim to further consolidate the power of the authoritarian rule (Heydemann, 2007). There are different reasons why the

[92] For the link between the economic liberalization and democracy please see Hinnebusch (2001b); Owen (2000: 142-143).

[93] It should be added that some authoritarian regimes of the Middle East (namely the non-rentier ones) have felt the need to appear democratic or appear to have democratic institutions. This is especially used to portray a democratic image to the outside world, not to the citizens themselves, in order to maintain external legitimacy and good economic links with the Western countries. Therefore, many democratic institutions and processes are present in Middle Eastern Republics without actually contributing to social, cultural or political pluralism. They merely provide means for the state to spread and consolidate its image and ideology in all spheres of life.

regime might resort to such a strategy. There may be an economic crisis, which increases the people's frustrations with the regime as was the case in Egypt. There may be a political crisis that significantly upsets the people, as was the case in Jordan.[95] In the case of Bashar al-Assad, it was his desire to consolidate power that drove his early liberalization policies. Ayyubi (1995: 329) also stresses that economic liberalization in the Middle East usually occurs as a public policy; as a state strategy considering not only production and employment levels, but also the "benefits [to] a significant stratum within the state apparatus".

3.2.1.2.2 Patronage, Co-Optation and Clientelism

The transformation of co-optation strategies is especially important in terms of the coherence between state institutions. The importance of "patronage and co-optation as mechanisms of containment and control within authoritarian regimes cannot be underestimated" (Kassem, 2004: 3). The strategies of co-optation being employed are significant as they relate to the 'legitimacy' of these regimes since the substance of the politics of co-optation determines to a large extent which segments of the polity the regime will seek support from. In other words, co-optation is a significant element of determining the direction, shape and degree of an elite alliance. It is necessary to recognize that absolute rule can only occur when power over material is combined with power over minds. Gramsci's writings about hegemonic power show that monopoly over popular discourse is necessary for establishing unquestionable rule. Then, in order to survive, regimes are supposed to seek the type of authority and power that is beyond the one produced by coercion and intimidation (Kassem, 2004: 3) Therefore, authoritarian states, like all political systems, also understand the requirement to buttress the basis of their popular support (Kassem, 2004: 4). As Owen (2000: 37) rightly puts, no president has the adequate "political or social base to simply…impose [their] ideas on the rest of the country" and are therefore compelled to make "concessions to important groups or supporters like the Alawite notables in Syria". In this regard, most authoritarian leaders are aware that "acquiescence can perhaps be achieved solely by coercion but support and acceptance cannot" (cited in Kassem, 2004: 4; Also see Jackson & Roseborg: 1982: 38). This is why in the absence of "accountable representation and a mobilizing

[95] Jordan allowed a certain level of freedom of expression during the American invasion of Iraq since the anti-American sentiments of the Jordanians supported the regime's position in the war.

ideology, authoritarian regimes depend on the distribution of patronage to establish a clientelist system that secures some form of stability" (cited in Kassem, 2004: 4). Durability, or stability, is directly related to the volume of networks of clients. Put differently, it can be argued that the larger the network of clients, the more durable the regime (Owen, 2000: 38). At this point clientelism can be summarized as follows:

> A system of patron-client ties that bind leaders and followers in relationships not only of mutual assistance and support, but also of recognized and accepted inequality between big men and lesser men. The ties usually extend from the center of a regime –that is from the ruler to his lieutenants, clients and other followers, and through them, their followers, and so on. The image of clientelism is one of extensive chains of patron-client ties (Jackson & Roseborg, 1982: 39).[96]

In all clientelist cases, "the interest in patronage resources is directed specifically at persons with power, positions and influence in the ruling councils of the state –that is at office holders in the cabinet, the party, the army, the civil service, and parastantal organizations" (Kassem, 2004: 11)[97], which means that rulers "provide their own parties with access to state resources while denying such access to the legalized opposition" (Kassem, 2004: 4). However, it is necessary to emphasize here that the changing of the co-optation strategies, the upsetting of the balance of power in patron-client relations, and/or the fact that a larger portion of society is being harmed can result in the deterioration of the existing stability and eat away at the inter-institutional and inter-elite alliances and their functioning. Here one can also add that in states with analogous institutions, co-optation is also subject to variation depending on the level of politicization of individuals and institutions.

Of course it is possible to observe patron-client relations formed in different fields. However, relations between the state and the economic elite, and the content and goals of the economic policies being adopted constitutes the first and most obvious aspect of this issue. The allocation of funds provided to the public and private sectors

[96] Also see Schmidt et al (1997).
[97] For the argument that the strategies of economic liberalization are used as instruments in order to extend the social and political base of regimes, see Hinnebusch (2001b).

in the economy, the extent of the relations between capital owners and politicians (crony capitalism), the level of autonomy that economic institutions enjoy and the level of corruption are just some of the issues to consider in this regard. The fact that economic liberalization policies have either altogether failed or have been unsuccessful in securing real returns for the people in both the short and medium terms in the Arab world, can thus be better understood as a result of the widespread corruption and crony capitalism. In this sense, it can be argued that:

> Crony capitalism is believed to arise when political cronyism spills over into the business world; self-serving friendships and family ties between businessmen and the government influence the economy and society to the extent that it corrupts public-serving economic and political ideals (Princeton, n.d).

Many experts on the region have also touched upon the authoritarian state's role in the national economy in their analyses of authoritarian structures (Owen & Pamuk, 1998; Henry, 2014). Modernization Theory expects that economic development, increased literacy, urbanization and non-agricultural development will make citizens independent and lead to a diverse set of social and political expectations (Hinnebusch, 2006). These diverse expectations, which the authoritarian governments would be unable to meet, will eventually lead to mobilization against the regime. However, academicians like Hinnebusch have clearly shown why this is not the case in the Middle East. It is not only a general rise in the awareness of the common citizen, but also the strength of opposition movements that is significant for prompting the path to democracy. Thus, financial independence of organized opposition is necessary for pluralism, and, in the long run, for democracy.

3.2.1.2.3 The Legal Constitutional Framework and the Judiciary

Apart from the patronage and co-optation strategies, exclusionary laws enable rulers not only to maintain control over the appointment and dismissal of officials but also to implement restrictions on the media, political opposition, civil society and policymaking (Kassem, 2004: 5). That is to say, a 'legal constitutional framework' provides authoritarian regimes with the capacity to exercise robust powers (Moustafa, 2007: 19-58). Thus it becomes "an additional tool that allows such regimes the necessary flexibility to change the outward appearance of the system

while ensuring its survival" (Kassem, 2004: 5). The legal apparatus empowers the authoritarian approach and at the same time provides it space in which to maneuver without any challenge (Kassem, 2004: 6). Yet, those individuals and groups who "challenge such unbalanced laws and rules are likely to unleash the state's coercive apparatus" (Kassem, 2004: 6).

It should be noted that apart from the constitutional framework and the legislative structure, the role of the judiciary, or more specifically the level of autonomy that the judiciary enjoys in the system, is also among the important factors that affect formal access, unity of the ruling elite and the coherence of the public administration.

3.2.1.2.4 Coercive Apparatus[98]/Military

When every other indirect method to regulate people's actions proves unsuccessful, a truly authoritarian regime employs the most basic method: violence. Nevertheless, the most effective method for regime survival is not the actual use of violence but the threat thereof. The internal deployment of the military against civilians has costs in terms of material as well as legitimacy. However, it is required in order to make an example of those who deviate from the system and to preempt the aims of rebellious activities.

It goes without saying that a state's coercive forces (military and police) are important for national defense and ensuring that government policies are observed. In authoritarian states, militaries, intelligence services and police, not only preserve the country's sovereignty, protect it from external aggression and assure day-to-day order, but they also guard the ruling regime, and this is why they can develop a key political role with changing decrees (Springborg, 2014).[99] In authoritarian cases, the coercive apparatus extends into the political realm much more prominently than in other systems. As Kassem (2004: 7) rightly states, "apart from direct military

[98] This section perhaps demands the greatest attention in order for the arguments of the present study to be communicated clearly. Similarly in my interview with B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012), he too stressed that I should pay special attention to the role, attitude and position of the military and the security forces while comparing Egypt and Syria. Thus, the main characteristics of these institutions and their relations with other institutions are of great significance.
[99] I should note that while the prominent actor in Egypt is the police, the army is more prominent in Syria. Moreover, the armed forces in Syria are more politicized than those in Egypt. See Owen (2000: 201).

interventions in the form of coups, the military (and police) performs an important political role in terms of supporting and even intervening to protect authoritarian regimes".

In this sense, Stacher (2007: 39) writes that "the security services in such states are a final bulwark for maintaining rule". In the absence of such support "it would be virtually impossible for an authoritarian regime to maintain its power" (Kassem, 2004: 7). As Bellin (2004: 143) argues, "patrimonial[100] linkages between the regime and coercive apparatus […] enmesh the two". In other words, for Bellin (2005), one of the factors explaining the exceptional coercive capacity and will of the Arab state is the patrimonial character of state institutions. Therefore, maintaining the support of the coercive agents not only necessitates a regular flow of state patronage, but also "strategic alliances within the highest levels of the security apparatus hierarchy" (Kassem, 2004: 7).

In his research, Brownlee (2002)[101] has also focused on the capacity of the security apparatus to repress dissent, particularly in times of political crisis. Many, as pointed out by Brownlee, determine the strength of the repressive apparatus of the state as the deciding factor in an uprising's success or failure. In Skocpol's words "the strength, coherence, and effectiveness of the state's coercive apparatus discriminates between cases of successful revolution and cases of revolutionary failure or non-occurrence" (1979: 29).[102] In this regard, especially in the cases of Egypt and Syria, the primary characteristics and inner dynamics of the military, and their role in the governance of the state is important in terms of comprehending their stance during times of crisis.[103] In the same vein, B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012) highlighted the importance of the military during our interview by arguing that:

> If I were to compare Egypt and Syria I would add one key variable in addition to the structure of the state formation. The armed forces are a key variable for the process. Where they lean is important, I would say even a determining

[100] For details on patrimonialism in the Arab world see Brownlee (2002) and Heacock (2002: 45-86). For a general discussion on this topic see Snyder (1992).
[101] This study provides concrete evidence based on case studies that supports Bellin's emphasis on the importance of security agencies for authoritarian endurance.
[102] B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012) underlines the same point.
[103] Almost every single interviewee emphasized this particular subject in their statements.

> factor in the outcome of the revolution. What is keeping the Syrian regime in power now, among many factors, […] is the support that the army has given. We did not have that in Egypt.

Drawing from Owen (2000: 200), the essence of civil-military relations in the Middle East can be stated as follows:

> Politicians, whether civilians or retired officers, will seek to keep military activity under some sort of control. Both sides will manipulate public opinion, look for allies, try to win over or divide key opponents. Rules establishing their relationship will be agreed to, challenged and then sometimes broken. Temporary balances will be reached, only to be quickly upset.

Therefore, it is also necessary to carry out a careful analysis of the military's share in the economies of these countries (Owen, 2000: 202). It is possible to observe that in the Middle East, the military holds a very prominent place in the economy. Due to the military's role and influence in the economy, the relations between members of the military and other state institutions, as well as capital owners, carries importance in terms of stability and durability. In this sense, upsetting the balance of power between these different actors may result in a change in the nature and degree of the support the military affords the president.

3.2.1.3 International Alliances and Constraints on State Policy

At the outset, one should note that in the study of International Relations it has become clear that the developments of a country's foreign and domestic policies are intimately linked. And at this point, where a state positions itself in the world order and with whom the interactions are arranged is very critical in shaping the state's mentality, its approach to its citizens and forms of domestic policies/strategies. Neither the challengers (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) nor the state act in a sphere free of international influence. It should be noted that "the international setting, particularly the way in which it intrudes upon domestic politics in different states, is also a critical component of political opportunity" when it comes to analyzing the interaction between national and international factors in "shaping the claims and possible effects of a social protest movement" (Meyer, 2003: 18). As Meyer (2003: 19) argues, "national political opportunity structures are nested in a larger

international setting that constrains" or endorses specific sort of opportunities for challengers. In other words, the international environment facilitates certain opportunities for challengers and states (Tarrow, 2001). In this sense, it is important to note that "the stability of ruling alignments is also nested in a larger international structure of political alliances, based on interests, values, norms and prejudices" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 477; Also see Rothman & Oliver, 1999).

As Skocpol (1979: 30) states, "geopolitical environments create tasks and opportunities for states and place limits on their capacities to cope with either external or internal tasks or crises" (Also see Noble, 1991: 49). In other words, international demands or pressure has the ability to open the door for political opportunities at the domestic level (Meyer, 2003: 21). Moreover, it is well known that in states with an authoritarian structure, foreign policy is also deployed as a source of legitimacy (Korany & Dessouki, 1991: 3).

In this regard, after providing the general foreign policy inclinations of both countries (the primary characteristics of their foreign policy), the foreign policy of these countries are going to be further investigated by considering three main points/approaches. Firstly, I will try to demonstrate in what manner foreign policy has been exploited by these regimes in order to 'legitimize' the authoritarian policies enacted within the state. This approach also provides valuable insights as a certain foreign policy subject can influence the level of overall legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of its people. Put differently, foreign policy has played an indirect but beneficial role for the regime, as it is often used to justify its policies. In this regard, the Arab-Israeli conflict and its use by various Arab regimes is the dominant issue. The Arab-Israeli conflict has symbolic importance for the entire Arab world. However, it has been drawn in a variety of directions and even entered straight into the middle of domestic contestations in countries like Egypt, Jordan and Syria. At this point, it is easy to observe that there is a remarkable difference between the Syrian and Egyptian cases, with the former supporting Hamas and Hezbollah and allying with Iran, and the latter allying with the West and playing an active role in the Camp David accords.

Secondly, this section will discuss the fact that the foreign policy of a state is also an instrument that determines the countries' level of integration with the international community, both economically (trade agreements, etc.) and culturally (Meyer, 2003: 19; Hinnesbusch, 2001:114-115). This particular point is of critical importance especially seeing that foreign policy inclinations provide convenient clues to the degree of the country's integration with the international community. For example, in a study comparing Egypt and Syria, Hinnebusch (2001: 121) explains with regards to foreign policy and international integration that "Compared to Egypt, in Syria the weight of the public sector is greater and the level of integration into the world market is lower". Again, in a different study, Hinnebusch (2003: 135) states that "subtle differences in state formation and identity shaped different concepts of state interest which given the right systemic factors, draw the two states in opposing directions".

Finally, I will argue that the suggestions coming from the allies of the given country and their worldviews will also have an impact on the state's mentality in terms of its approach to society. As Jenkins (1995: 33) argues, "social movements are not just prisoners of their national boundaries but are profoundly shaped by their international environments". I identify international alignment, or environment, by adopting Brownlee's conceptualization, which argues that it is "not international support for the current rulers, but rather their lack of reliance on external patrons that enabled their shift to brutality" and thus, "it is not international backing per se but rather an absence of international constraints on the rulers' use of force" that is critical (Brownlee, 2005: 60-61). In other words, the identity of the external patrons and the type of interactions among the allies are critical determining factors regarding the use of force.

Hence, in one way or another, alliances, trade agreements, etc. constrain a country's domestic policy alternatives. International politics has an absolute impact on "both the strength of national institutions and the policy options available" to the rulers (Meyer, 2003: 19).

All in all, the co-optation policies, the practice of democracy, politics of economic restructuring, the changing role of the military and its impact on the

structure/situation of society -which is mostly shaped by the policies of the state, or in other words erosion of the corporatist social pact that sustained authoritarianism (Korany & el-Mehdi, 2012: 14) - and the position of the country in the world order are the main themes that are going to be examined in this part of the study. At this point it should be stated that by focusing on these themes I am not underestimating the importance of the role of society with its accumulated grievances and group dynamics.[104] In this respect, I believe that in the final analysis, the characteristics of a state (regime) and its policies somehow figure into affecting and shaping the society. Therefore, in Korany and el-Mahdi's words the "silenced dynamics" that had not previously received enough attention are going to be covered by the analyses in this dissertation (2012: 10). Here, Turner (1980: 142) reminds us in his article entitled "Social Dramas and Stories about Them" of how certain entrenched features of "a given society's social structure [*mainly shaped by the state*] influence both the course of conduct in observable social events and the scenarios of its genres of cultural performance". It should be noted here that this research stresses the importance of history, and structure and agency in deciding the path, and consequently, the outcome of the uprisings.

Therefore, this section of the research aims to address Egypt and Syria's descent into an increasingly unstable period in the last decade. Within this frame of reference, I will briefly present my core observations and findings acquired throughout the research process. Recent developments within the context of 'Arab Spring' and beyond provide more than enough evidence of the rapidly developing turmoil that has struck the region. Moreover, it is obvious that these events in Syria and Egypt are not overnight occurrences. Considering this blaring reality, it is pertinent to outline at least the general trends that contributed to the social and political contexts existing years prior to the recent waves of 'Arab Spring' in these two countries. Specifically, in order to form an accurate understanding of the inner workings of the political spheres in Egypt and Syria, it is necessary not only to examine the dynamics of current political conflicts, but also to uncover the reasoning behind former Egyptian President Prime Hosni Mubarak and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's respective rigid policies and to take into account the perspectives of local actors. In order to

[104] At this point, for insightful classical works on the parameters of Arab societies see Eickelman (2002); Ibrahim and Hopkins (1997).

shed light on this political and social context, certain points originating from the data collected in my interviews deserve further analysis.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN EGYPT

4.1 Egypt as a Semi-Authoritarian State

This chapter will discuss the general characteristics of Egyptian state and the society up until 2011. In this context, this section focuses especially on matters such as the structure of state institutions, their autonomy or the lack thereof, the role of the president within this system, the primary dynamics of inter-institutional relations (whether this presents any coherence), democratic procedures and foreign relations. The developments in the last 10 years will be evaluated in the context of these existing balances; whether autonomy has increased or decreased, whether elite alliances have gotten stronger or weaker, whether there was a greater amount of coherence, etc. At this point, it is necessary to underline one more time that due to the authoritarian nature of the two regimes that are the subject matters of this study, it is not sufficient to merely refer to the *executive*, *legislative* and *judiciary*. In other words, we also have to account for the "military", one of the most commonly encountered actors in authoritarian regimes.

While discussing the changes in both the state system and in the society, it is important to analyze in general terms the institutions and relationships that have played a significant role both prior to and during the uprisings. In this regard the presidency, military, judiciary, economic elite, party politics and foreign policy are the main topics. Understanding the role and state of these variables within Egyptian politics can provide key insights with which to correctly interpret the developments that have occurred particularly between the years 2000-2011.

4.1.1 Egyptian State and Bureaucracy

Since 1820 when the groundwork for a modern state was first established, Egypt has always been a powerful state with a solid structure (al-Bishry, 2001). As noted by T. al-Bishry (personal communication, January 3, 2013), one of Egypt's most prominent public intellectuals, the Egyptian state has never fallen short of fulfilling its functions. In fact, all past revolutions have resulted in some form of prosperity for the state and the people (Leyla, 2012: 29). State institutions accompanied the Urabi revolution[105], the July 19 and 23rd revolutions, and have, in a way, been consolidated and buttressed by these revolutions (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 3, 2013). Thus, these revolutions have not caused the state to falter and the population to decline. Yet, the formal political structure in Egypt has changed[106] considerably since the military intervention in 1952 (Kassem, 2004: 2).[107] At the very beginning a populist-socialist single party system was established under Gamal Abdel Nasser.[108] This populist state that emerged with the 1952 revolution[109] was essentially a combination of a national liberation line of thought with a social justice line of thought, with underlying themes of emancipation and cultural authenticity. For S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 13, 2012), a very prominent Egyptian social scientist, this combination was very attractive to the intelligentsia and to the masses.

In fact, under Abdul Nasser, the state mechanism underwent a new structural acceleration and the state structure was solidified when it was reorganized in a thoroughly modern fashion, the likes of which were formerly unattained (al-Bishry, 2001: 49-50). Although Abdul Nasser never had a party in real terms, he pursued all of his policies directly through the state and in this manner was able to oblige society to adopt all of his policies. This populist package worked up until the defeat of 1967.

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[105] The term "revolution" has been used intentionally. I do not question whether or not the Arab Spring can categorized as a revolution or not. I adopt this term because the Egyptians prefer to use in their everyday language.

[106] For theoretical discussion on change and continuity in the Egyptian political system, see Dessouki (2008: 16-24).

[107] For a detailed analysis of the fundamentals of the change after the military intervention in 1952, see Cook (2012: 39-63); for another account on Egyptian political trajectory, see Cook (2007: 63-92). He mainly focuses on the institutionalization of a military based system. For an analysis of the role of the National Democratic Party see Arafat (2009) and Dessouki (2008: 139-311).

[108] For the main schools of political thoughts in Egypt see Abu-Zeed (2004)

[109] See the footnote 113.

This defeat was devastating not only to the Egyptians, but to the Arabs as a whole. For General Q. Said (personal communication, January 3, 2013), it caused enormous discord within Nasser's regime.

Following Nasser's death, Sadat came to office and immediately initiated an open-door policy, both economically and culturally. He introduced free enterprise and in S. E. Ibrahim's words "de-Nasserised Egypt" (personal communication, December 13, 2012) in many respects and opened a link with the West (Dessouki, 1991: 166). The Western linkage, indeed, had been severed either abruptly and intentionally or by the force of events during the Nasser years (Hinnebusch, 2002: 94-95). Nasser's populist system was replaced by a political framework in which opposition parties have been legally functioning since 1976 (Assayyed, 2001: 332; Dessouki, 2008: 187-194). In addition to this, the introduction of the *Infitah* in 1974 and the "adoption of an economic reform and structural adjustment program in 1991 have reinforced the change of direction adopted by the post-1952 regime over the years" (Kassem, 2004: 3; also see Lesch, 2012: 26). Last but not least, the peace initiative with Israel that evolved under Sadat was also another part of this new package initiated by Sadat.[110] In fact, Abdul Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat refrained from tampering with the state or, in other words, did not attempt to undermine state institutions, even after 10 years.

Hosni Mubarak, replacing Anwar Sadat who had been killed by a member of the Islamic Jihad on 6 October 1981, was born in 1928 and is from a military background like his predecessors. President Mubarak is described by Prof. S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 13, 2012), who knows him very well, as follows:

> Mubarak made sure that the deep state would be on his side and that it would be strong so that he could stay in power without fear. He did not make any big splashes; he did not take any undue risks. He was just a typical dutiful bureaucrat at the rank of the vice-presidency and at the rank of the presidency.

[110] "He did the 1973 war, which gave Egyptians a feeling that they redeemed their national honor, and he stated that "from now on we will live on new grounds". Part of the new grounds would be to have an economic open door policy, liaison with the West both internationally and regionally while working on the peace process with Israel" (S.E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 13, 2012). For further analyses see Rabinovich (2004).

> Amazingly this enabled him to stay longest. He was the third longest ruler in the history of Egypt.[111] He accomplished this not through personal brilliance or capturing the imagination of anybody, he was not a very imaginative fellow.[112] He was just a survivalist. He would do things that would enable him to get by without any long-range project and vision. In that sense he is a typical bureaucrat.

Thus it can be argued that Mubarak became what Lesch (2012: 18) calls "accidental president"[113] just after the assassination of Sadat, and declared a state of emergency which he had since renewed every three years.[114] Mubarak, who unlike Nasser and Sadat lacked self-confidence, tried to dominate the state system in order to prove himself. In the words of al-Bishry (personal communication, January 2, 2013), who was a close witness to Mubarak's accession to power in 1980, from the very first days of his reign, Mubarak "tried to attain a total hegemony by weakening those below him, as is the custom for tyrannical and miserable statesmen".[115] In the same vein, S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 13, 2012) also states that Mubarak's very modest political imagination did not allow him to project well-integrated visions like those of Nasser and Sadat (Also see Arafat, 2009: 138; Amin, 2011: 16). Instead, according to S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 13, 2012), Mubarak had "the cunningness and the shrewdness of a survivalist". Hence, it can be expressed that there are two main projects in Egypt's recent history: Nasser's populist project and Sadat's open door project. As a result, when Mubarak came to the office he chose to be eclectic and took parts of both Nasser's package and Sadat's package (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 13, 2012;

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[111][The first being Ramses II who stayed in power for 42 years, the second was Mohammed Ali who stayed in power 40 years and then Mubarak in third.]

[112] Zahran as an activist states that "Mubarak did not have a personal dream, that's why this system could not continue simply because there was no dream to empower it" (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

[113] Arafat also describes him as an "accidental president" see Arafat (2009: 138); In the same vein, he is characterized as an "unexpected" president by Cook (2012: 274).

[114] The state of emergency had been used to consolidate the absolute power of the president. It provided the president with the ability to "restrain the movement of individuals, search people or places without warrants, tap telephones, monitor and ban publications, forbid meetings, and particularly intern suspects without trial" (Lesch, 2012: 19); For details of the emergency law, see Seif el-Islam (2002: 364-366).

[115] Also see A. Musa (personal communication, January 2, 2013).

A. Zahran, personal communication, December 12, 2012; Cook, 2012: 274).[116] However, over the next 20 years (until 2000), not only did Mubarak prove to be incompetent in undermining state institutions, he also had to resist and address sporadic power struggles that were meant to undermine him, thus gaining political experience (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013; Arafat, 2009: 138). From 2000 up until 2011, the state found itself in a period of dissolution (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013; Cook, 2012: 167-209).

The power struggle within the state persisted at a very intense level up until 1990-1991. During his time in office, Mubarak either obeyed the American government completely or mostly. This continued through the Gulf War and subsequently, after the termination of then Minister of Defense Abu Ghazeleh's term, he succeeded in establishing control over the military –which is presently accepted to be the most functional institution in Egypt- and consolidating his authority.[117] In other words, this marked the beginning of a new era in which Mubarak would increase both his effectiveness and his power (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012).[118] During this process Mubarak simultaneously undertook several long term operations aimed at dissipating state institutions and alternative power groups (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013; A. Musa, personal communication, January 2, 2013). One of the most recent examples of this was the dismissal of the active Foreign Minister Amr Mousa, who had worked to create a more functional foreign ministry during his term from 1991-2001. This situation was not at all surprising to people who were well acquainted with Mubarak's strategies. A. Shubaky (personal communication, December 25, 2012), a prominent Egyptian political analyst has expressed that Mubarak's "style was to manage the power so as to eliminate all the power inside the regime; Amr Moussa, for example, 10 years ago was popular and Mubarak sent him to the Arab League".

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[116] Ottoway (2003: 35-47) interestingly uses the subtitles while discussing the three different periods as follows: "Democratization Interrupted under Nasser", "Rethinking Democratization under Sadat" and "Mubarak and the Consolidation of the Semi-Authoritarian State". Hopwood (1993: 183) categorizes Mubarak era as "Mubarak's Middle Way".

[117] For insights about the rivalry between Mubarak and Ghazala see Springborg (1989: 98-104, 118-123); Yasigh (2012: 6-7); Cook (2012: 158-159).

[118] For N. Mustafa personal communication, December 19, 2012) one of the main mistakes made by Mubarak was his 'personalization of power'.

During the interview, when asked whether there were any problems or conflict during his time in government, A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013), who is currently an important and active figure in Egyptian politics, explained the primary reasons for his removal from his post as follows:

> The president was very strong at that time. He had foreign policy in his control as well as all the other institutions, such as the *mukhabarat* (intelligence) etc. These helped the president in his leadership of foreign affairs. When I came [1991] I had a different view and different system.[119] … Perhaps this created something new, yet it was not a power center in fact. The foreign ministry was working, working as a foreign ministry should do. A lot of expertise, reports, meetings, research, forums, proposals and ideas. This system, especially approaching the year 2000 and the president started to, not exactly at that time but others did not like this and what happened, happened. I was so happy as the Secretary General of the Arab League.

As this passage demonstrates, after 10 years Mubarak was even willing to discharge Mousa because of the fact that he perceived him as a threat, and despite that fact that he was one of the most important political figures of the 90's and a man whose popularity continued to increase with each passing day (A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012).[120] Therefore, according to T. al-Bishry (personal communication, January 2, 2013), it took Mubarak another 10 years of gaining further strength to fully implement this process of weakening the state. One could say that the real decay and dismantling of the state first started in 2000 and that by 2010 all of the existing and potential capabilities of the state had been conclusively demolished (Leyla, 2012: 26). These policies and projects are what helped Mubarak construct a total hegemony and gave the President full domination

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[119] He described the system during our interview as follows: "I started to build priorities. … I opened several new files. None of the institutions knew anything about it. In particular, the Mediterranean file brought a different Egyptian policy to Europe and new dynamics were created. … I toured Africa, I assembled businessmen with me and hired a private plane. I rented the plane and they paid their tickets and we flew delegations of businessmen into Africa with the Foreign Minister. This created another fuss with the economic establishment. … This is something that the foreign ministry and the Egyptian diplomacy has done regardless of the economic establishment. I of course consulted them about the idea but the actions that I took was something for the foreign ministry to decide upon…" (Personal communication, January 2, 2013).

[120] A. Mousa had become quite popular because of his firm public stance on Israel. A pop-song "I hate Israel, I love Amr Mousa" by the Egyptian singer Shaaban Abdel Rahim was a huge hit. See Cook (2012: 300).

over the state, which in turn have resulted in the state's loss of its intrinsic power and its capacity to resist political pressure (A. Soliman, personal communication December 23, 2012).

4.1.2 The "Dysfunctional State" of 2000s as a Result of Inner Decay

In short, it is possible to divide the Mubarak era to three periods: 1980 to 1990-1991; 1990-2000 and 2000-2011. Interview data suggests that in its last 10 years the Hosni Mubarak regime was incompetent and was working under very unfavorable conditions in terms of state governance.[121] Egypt had lost the opportunities and capabilities that would enable it to bear the burden of the administration or help it stand on its feet. At that time the regime was in no way competent to govern. As A. E. H. Dessouki (personal communication, December 24, 2012) has stressed, the regime was in a state of total inner decay. This condition was intensified throughout the last ten years. On this issue A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013) argues that:

> The state was highly centralized in the hands of the president of the republic. He was the one who called the shots and decided everything. He would ask the advisor whomever he wishes to ask but was under no obligation to follow their advice. All institutions used to report to him. So when he was strong the country or the state was functioning. When he grew old and became weaker, the confusion in the realm of authority became apparent and affected the viability of the regime.

4.1.2.1 Personal Authoritarian Rule in Egypt

Despite the historical setbacks and advances in terms of the populist-socialist and liberal characteristics of the Egyptian state, "personal authoritarian rule survived and was maintained for more than five decades" (Kassem, 2004: 3).[122] In other words, a multi-party period and more liberal policies did not affect the outcome of the government. As Owen (2000: 148) puts it, the Egypt was a prototypical "example of

[121] This presents such a clear and tangible split that an ordinary Egyptian could easily make the same categorization. Many ordinary Egyptians that I have spoken with near Tahrir, Madinatun Nasr, Mukattam or Faisal, express views that are parallel to the analyses of important academics.
[122] In this regard, in her famous book on Egyptian politics, Kassem (2004) examines why authoritarian rule is so resilient in Egypt and explains why democracy is not functioning despite of the changing policies.

a state which made the transition from multi-party competition to single party control and then back to a managed system of competition again".[123] Arafat (2009: 18) elaborates this important point by arguing that:

> The transition to a multiparty system was basically intended to strengthen the authoritarian system by enhancing its capacity to contain and moderate dissent. It was also used to solicit the regime's legitimacy from both the president's party and the loyal opposition parties.

Therefore, it can be asserted that the basic goal of 'Egyptian pluralism' was not to push the state bodies towards democratic rule. Rather, it seems that the main purpose was "to stop at the point of semi-authoritarianism" (Arafat, 2009: 18). Indeed, according to Marina Ottoway (2003), Egypt is a perfect model of semi-authoritarianism. In Kassem's words "the formal branches of government remained subservient to the overwhelming domination of the executive branch and the development of autonomous groupings and constituencies remained hindered and weak" (2004: 3).[124] All in all, while the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak regimes have all had their own distinct characteristics, the important point of Kassem's analysis is the fact that "the nature of personal authoritarian rule in the presidency remained unchanged during all three eras" (2004: 3).

Moreover, when analyzed in terms of party systems[125], one can see that despite the existence of several weak parties[126], Mubarak succeeded in preserving single party policy (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012).[127] This single party policy led to the integration of the government into the single party and thus forced some factions of the society to become dependent on membership to the party in order to attain their personal goals (A. Soliman, personal communication, December 23, 2012). Arafat (2009: 19) describes National Democratic Party (NDP) as follows:

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[123] For the fundamentals of the parliamentary system in Egypt see Abbas (2001: 68-72).
[124] For a comprehensive account on the role of the executive body in the Egyptian political system see. Rizq (2001: 83-96).
[125] For the sources of opposition parties' weakness see Springborg (1989: 198-210); Arafat (2009: 143-146); al-Bishry (2011: 14).
[126] Hassan (2012: 77-80) describes these parties as *"Ahzab al-muaradah al-maridah"*.
[127]According to N. Mostafa personal communication, December 19, 2012), the main reason for the weakness of the other political parties is the fact that they were very elites and did not have grassroots projects. For the main dynamics of party system in Egypt see Assayyed, (2001: 319-360).

> … the NDP is not a real political party, nor is it an ideological trend. It represents only those who wish to be linked to the state. Generally no separation exists between the state and the party. The NDP was not organized or built to win elections and votes.[128]

In terms of the NDP's relationship with other parties and effective political actors, Mubarak sought policies to decrease the effectiveness of other 'legal' opposition parties such as the Wafd Party, the Union Party and the United Nasserist Party (S. E. Ahmed, personal communication, December 13, 2012). Mubarak acted in a way that pushed the Islamist opposition towards illegal activities and undermined its legitimacy, thinking that as a result the people would eschew this opposition.[129] As a result, the appropriate grounds and conditions for the formation of alternative politics was obliterated and the majority of the society forced into a-politicization.

In fact, limited pluralism is allowed in authoritarian regimes, but coercion/pressure is not the sole and predominant form of control (Kassem, 2004: 3). As it is seen in the Egyptian case, Kassem explains that "successful and enduring authoritarian regimes depend on a balanced use of patronage and skillful cooptation, the adoption of exclusionary laws and the coercive apparatus of the state" (2004: 3). Put differently, to Kassem, "the combination of these policies allows for the existence of contained pluralism within an authoritarian regime and permits it to adopt images of liberalization/democratization without actually conceding to such measures" (2004: 3). Yet, as will be evaluated in the upcoming pages, this creates an 'over-confidence' among the ruling elite[130], which in time leads to an incompetent state. In other words, these strategies do not seem to harm the authoritarian nature of the state, but they are among the main factors that lead to the gradual decay of the state. The reasons for the increasing discontent experienced in the 2000s among the Egyptian society cannot be credited only to poor socio-economic policies (Leyla, 2012: 25), but must include Mubarak's one-man show and Egyptian states's inner decay. Interview data suggests that in order to more fully grasp the extent of the decline experienced in Egyptian

[128] Also see Hassan, (2012: 102); el-Ghobashy (2012: 132).
[129] For a comprehensive analysis of the conflict between Mubarak and the political Islamists see al-Avdee (2009); Singerman (2002: 29-35).
[130]For a historical account on the Egyptian elite, see Akhavi (1982: 223-266).

politics during the 2000's, one should factor in the role of Gamal Mubarak (Hassan, 2012: 15-64).

4.1.3 The Gamal Effect

> *Mubarak stayed in power for 30 years ... After 20 years you start to lose some of your power particularly through economic difficulties. Besides, Egyptian people were humiliated when it came to the question of tawrith [inheritance]. A lot of Egyptians felt that Mubarak ignored them. He never said whether Gamal would become a candidate or not that also plays an important role. Gamal started to be a figure in the party in 2002 and corrupted businessmen close to him to like Ahmad Ezz (Hassan, 2012: 65-70) and others entered the political area (A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012).*[131]

Interview data reveals the impression that the elderly Hosni Mubarak was grooming his son Gamal Mubarak (Moustafa, 2004), a name that was unfavorable and disdained by both Egyptian society and an overwhelming section of the state elite, was another reason for the rising discontent among Egyptian society. There were also indications that this impression was justified, such as Gamal's suggestions that the government and economy be taken seriously. It is argued that this impression made a sizeable contribution to the overall state of degeneration in Egypt (Aly, 2012: 31). For instance, one of the primary reasons for the "confusion in the realm of authority" was the increasing power of Gamal and his crew (A. Mousa, personal communication, January 2, 2013). Thus, for A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013) the elite alliance was becoming more fragile as a consequence. In this regard he notes that:

> Nobody liked Gamal Mubarak…. Why should he be the president? Why should he be imposed on us? This was the thing that really weakened everything and brought down the regime. You can find a lot of failures in managing the affairs of Egypt, but you can also find supporters of the policies themselves, such as the business community. But on the question of *tawrith*,

[131] Gamal Mubarak was linked to the perception of corruption and to allegations with regards to the relationship between wealth and power in Egypt. See Aly (2012: 32).

> 99 % were against him. Absolutely… Including the upper echelons and all levels of the army. Nobody accepted this, so the regime disintegrated.

Last but not least, it should also be noted that not naming a vice president, even as H. Mubarak advanced in age, intensified the rumors that his son was going to be the next president (Cook, 2012: 202).[132] It is a matter of fact that although Gamal Mubarak never publicly stated that he was interested in becoming president, he also never "denied that he coveted the position" (Cook: 2012: 203) A. Mousa's statement clearly demonstrates how important the issue of Gamal's accession had been in disturbing the alliance between state institutions and the elite.

In 2000, the outspoken sociologist S. E. Ibrahim was the first to suggest that Hosni Mubarak was grooming Gamal to succeed him just as Bashar al-Assad succeeded Hafez al-Assad in Syria.[133] Indeed, it should be noted that during the 2000's, a new set of politicians led by Gamal Mubarak assumed leading positions in the government and the NDP. Interview data confirms that this "new composition" and the public discontent following its establishment can be considered one of the main factors, or 'political opportunity structure', that paved the way to the uprisings in 2011. In fact, Gamal Mubarak and his crew seem not only to have played a leading role with regards to how the military positioned itself, but were also influential in the 2005 and 2010 elections and caused many otherwise loyal actors to distance themselves from the regime which resulted in a public that had exhausted its patience as a direct result of economic instability.[134] Therefore, it can be described as the "Gamal effect" on Egyptian politics during the 2000's. As Aly states, the story of Gamal Mubarak "would have an impact on future developments in Egypt" (2012: 31).

Gamal created the party's Policies Secretariat at the NDP congress in 2002 (September) which was held under the slogan "A New Style of Thinking" (Cook,

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[132] Mubarak eventually appointed Omar Suleiman as VP during the uprisings in 2011.
[133] Should be noted that S. E. Ibrahim knows the Mubarak family very well; also see Aly (2012: 32); Arafat (2009: 185).
[134] For details about internal rifts and conflicts within the NDP see Arafat (2009: 43-59). This chapter entitled "The Tug of War" provides very interesting and important insights about the rivalries and opposition within the NDP.

2012: 169).[135] He declared at this congress that there is a need for "audacious leaders who are able to prepare their country for the future and implement some reforms even when they are unpopular" (Mubarak, 2009). As a result, a cabinet reshuffling named Ahmed Nazif, the then Minister of Communications and Information Technology, as Prime Minister of Egypt in July 2004. The new members of the cabinet[136] "claimed that they would reduce the bureaucratic stranglehold and reinvigorate economic growth" (Lesch, 2012: 20; Also see al-Aswany, 2011: 13-14). In Lesch's words these new modernizer elite "combined obsequiousness, as they knew that they owed their positions to the Mubaraks, with arrogance, as they believed that they could act with impunity with no accountability to the public" (2012: 20). Scholarly works and interview data suggest that that this reshuffling was a strategy for corruption, "as the ministers ignored the public interest in favor of their and their friends' private interests" (Lesch, 2012: 21).

Subsequently, Gamal was appointed deputy secretary general of the NDP by the president in 2006 (Hassan, 2012: 102-105). In 2008, he launched and led a 46 member Higher Policies Council at the NDP's annual conference (Lesch, 2012: 23). This was a period in which Egypt witnessed the strengthening and accession to power of Gamal Mubarak and his team. At this point, Gamal and his cronies' power was increasing as a result of the 2005 constitutional changes (Hassan, 2012: 15-17) and elections. This increase in power as well as the deceit by Ahmad Ezz during the 2010 elections are just some of the incidents experienced by the Egyptian people during the years between 2005-2010. Interview data suggests that the opposition groups were invigorated as Gamal became even more visible and the reputation of the state was further tarnished with each passing day. Many people of various allegiances joined the ranks of the opposition due to the ignorance of Hosni Mubarak's as well as the arrogant behavior and policies of Gamal Mubarak and his followers. In this sense, interview data suggests that the presence of Gamal Mubarak and his crew created an opportunity for people to join the opposition (political mobilization).

[135] "The vanguard of the party's new agenda was the emerging "Young Turks" of Egyptian politics and finance. The central figure of this group was the president's son Gamal Mubarak".
[136] For details about the new ministers and their business affiliations see Lesch (2012: 21).

The rise of Gamal Mubarak and his followers their ability to attain a more active and effective presence in politics and economy have perhaps disturbed the army the most (A. Mousa, personal communication, January 2, 2013). It was obvious that an important "struggle was taking shape between Egypt's old guard, representing the military and the bureaucracy and the new guard, representing Mubarak's son Gamal and his supporters in the business community and the ruling party" (Shehata, 2011). In spite of the fact that no one in the army had taken a concrete stance against Mubarak until the uprisings unfolded in 2011, the economic interests that the executive directors of the army had established with the regime (Springborg, 1989: 104-118) were suddenly threatened as a result of the activities of Gamal Mubarak and his gang, thus causing them to be viewed as a threat (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

4.1.4 The Role and Place of Military in Egyptian Politics

As in many other authoritarian regimes, the military is one of the primary political actors in Egypt (Kandil, 2012a; Harb; 2003).[137] The mere fact that every president since Nasser has been of military origin is a clear indicator of this (Abdel-Malek, 1968). Although some have stated that the military, being directly accountable to the presidency, had no efficacy of its own[138], it is important to understand that this is not the case. Hazem Kandil (2012b: 4) who, in his academic capacity, has closely followed the Egyptian military and its internal dynamics says that:

> … the 2011 revolt has taken many by surprise because of the misguided belief that the Egyptian regime has maintained its military character throughout. In other words, observers unanimously treated army support as a constant, not a variable… This is clearly because very few took the military seriously as an institution with distinctive interests, depicting it instead as a supplement to the regime, and conflating the officer corps with any political actor with a military background (whether he be president, intelligence or prime minister).

[137] For a full-fledged understanding of the Egyptian army see Kandil's pieces published in different platforms and particularly the one published in Korany and el-Mahdi's volume. In this volume his examination of the military as present day Egypt's central institution before, during and after the revolution. See Kandil (2012a: 175-198); Harb (2003: 285-286).

[138] "Even the earthquake that shook Egypt to the core left this unshakable consensus intact, with writers insisting that the high command had no qualms with the existing order and only reluctantly deserted Mubarak and his cronies because they became liabilities" Kandil (2012b: 4).

Understanding the essential dynamics of the military's relationship with other institutions as well as with society is essential in terms of interpreting and comprehending its political stance and its reflexes. In regard to this point, it is important to remember that the military has been a critical actor in the economy (Mourroushi, 2011; Cook, 2007: 19-20; Marshall & Stacher, 2012). In his books, Cook (2007, 2012) provides clear insight into the autonomy and critical interests of the Egyptian military establishment (Also see Springborg, 1989: 104-118; Springborg, 1987: 5-16).[139] In his words:

> In the early 1980s, the military establishment, under the command of Defense Minister Mohamed Abdel Halim Abu-Ghazala, carved out its own significant and lucrative portion of Egypt's commercial and industrial sectors through a combination of the National Service Projects Organization (NSPO), the Arab (later "Egyptian") Organization for Industrial development, and a variety of cooperative ventures with both domestic and foreign manufacturers. This diverse portfolio, which includes the manufacture of weapons, electronics, and consumer goods; infrastructure development; various agribusinesses; as well as services in aviation, tourism, and security sectors has rendered the military perhaps Egypt's single most important economic entity (Cook, 2012: 19).[140]

4.1.4.1 Conflicting Interests between the Military and Other Ruling Elite

It is a matter of fact that the Egyptian Army, for the last 60 years, has been accustomed to being the primary actor in the Egyptian political system. All prime ministers have come from the military. Yet, particularly during the Mubarak regime, police forces and internal security began replacing the military as playing the primary actors (Aly, 2012: 33; Kandil, 2012b: 7). In Kandil's words:

> When people took to the streets in 2011 the military was no longer invested in the regime, it had become the least privileged member of the ruling coalition that emerged out of the 1952 coup. After a series of wars, conspiracies, coup plots, and socioeconomic transformations the balance within Egypt's tripartite

[139] Ret. General Q. Said (personal communication, January 3, 2013) elaborates this point as follow: "In the military factories you were producing something for civilians as well. I remember that we bought an oven to cook food which was produced by these factories. It was cheap and worked and has worked up until now. So, in every factory you have some civilian products. If the factory is working on electronics, the factory produces some television systems".

[140] Similar points were highlighted by S. A. Fettah (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

> alliance tilted heavily toward the security apparatus, with the political leadership living contentedly in its shadow and the military subordinated, if not totally marginalized (2012b: 7).

If the budget of the army is compared to the budget of the police, it can be seen that the police forces have, in the last 10-15 years, increased in number 400 times (Sayigh, 2012: 7). Conversely, the military's budget –obviously being in part dependent on the money they receive from the US- increased in relatively smaller amounts (Sharp, 2009: 26-30).

While Mubarak was upgrading the role of the police force (Aly, 2012: 3; B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012; Brownlee, 2012: 12), he also made efforts to please the army by both opening up a space for the army to be an economic actor (Kandil, 2012a: 182-184) and assigning military commanders to administrative and civil positions (Cook, 2007: 26).[141] For instance, there were thirteen Generals among former soldiers, some of whom served in the intelligence office and some of whom served in the armed forces, in the Prime Minister's office. Also, 20 to 30 percent of those who were employed in the General Secretariat of the Egyptian People's Assembly had military origins (S. A. Fettah, personal communication, May 4, 2013). This does not mean that Mubarak upgraded the role of internal security in order to render the army powerless (Sayigh, 2012: 8). Indeed, as Bradley (2008: 204) argues that:

> The military is by no means the all dominant power it was in the 1950s and 1960s, and the phenomenal growth of the internal security forces means it now acts as a counterweight to the military's power; but the military remains a crucial pillar, many would argue the crucial pillar of the regime.

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the military officers have consistently considered their personal economic and political gains as more important than economic development (Cook, 2007: 19). In Imad Harb's words the military officers "enjoy an off budget revenue system them invested in the regime's survival" (2003: 285-286). However, interview data suggests that the military commanders contested

[141] Sayigh (2012: 10-18) discusses every detail of the promotion of retired commanders.

the idea of Gamal Mubarak's accession to power (Also see Bradley, 2008: 204-205). The military's discontent with Gamal started to become more obvious with the 2010 election results that increased the ruling party's seats by 97 percent (Lesch, 2012: 23). When the January 25th Revolution broke out, the military benefited from this situation.[142] Parallel to this argument that the military benefitted, Kandil also underlines that:

> The economic niche that the military controlled began to diminish with the aggressive privatization policy of the ruling capitalists who colonized the ruling party; its social privileges were dwarfed by those of the security and political elite; the quality of its manpower deteriorated significantly as a result of the social and educational collapse of the Mubarak years; its exclusive reliance on the United States might have made it impressive on paper, but in reality has crippled its capacity to project regional power (2012b: 7).

Therefore, it is obvious that there emerged a "silenced conflict of interests" (Cook, 2007: 20; Bradley, 2008: 204) between the army and businessmen who were simultaneously either NDP members or ministers (Sayigh, 2012: 7).[143] Even Bradley uses the phrase "a potential to create schism" while he is talking about the conflicting interests (2008: 204). My interviews with different scholars and former military officers also confirm this conflict of interest among the ruling elite in Egypt.

4.1.5 Egypt as an American Ally and This Alliance's Impact on State Policy

As is particularly emphasized in my interviews, the dynamics and the intensity of foreign relations in Egypt have played an important role in determining the regime's reflexes. Therefore, a closer look at this issue is compulsory. It is a matter of fact that a state's foreign relations influence not only its mindset and reflexes, but how it frames and comprehends the world. In other words, the domestic policies of a country are also somehow calculated into shaping its foreign relations. The institutions that are in a close contact with external actors are supposedly more likely to act in line with the intentions of their external *patrons*.

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[142] See chapter VIII.

[143] Personal communication with B. Korany, M. Zayat, A. Soliman, Q. Said and others underline this phenomena.

After actively operating under Western rule between 1882 and 1956, post- 1960's Egypt can still be characterized as implicitly –though not actively—under Western dominion. Needless to say, the Nasser period, when Gamal Abdul Nasser along with Nehru and Tito became one of the most eminent voices among Third World Countries, can to a certain extent be excluded from this characterization. However, following the political and military defeats sustained during Nasser's later years, relations with the West once again flourished and continued to do so throughout the Sadat period, with the signing of historic treaties such as Camp David and the recognition of Israel.[144] It should be underlined that Egypt's peace deal with Israel has positively impacted its relations with the West (Sharp, 2011: 32-35; Brownlee, 2012a: 12-13). Such policies were maintained throughout the Mubarak era. The economic dependency that formed during this period also gave rise to a political dependency upon the US (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012).This political dependency developed to such an extent that since then Egypt has continually been one of the largest recipients of American foreign aid[145], along with Israel.[146] What is more, as a result of this dependency Egypt is unequivocally an ally of the United States.[147]

It is not possible to observe a notable change in the country's overall foreign policy during Mubarak's era.[148] It has stood by the US through both Gulf Wars.[149] Essentially, Egypt stands out as a country that is economically and culturally open to both the West and the world and has consequently been integrated into the world system despite its shortcomings. Its primary trading partners are among the most basic indicators of this economic and cultural openness. In particular, the Egyptian

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[144] The termination of the state of war between the Israel and Egypt; Israel's withdrawal from Sina'i; the establishment of normal relations are among the main articles of the treaty. See Cook (2012: 149-1545). Here I would like to express my gratitude to N. Mostafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012) for explaining in detail the primary reasons for Egypt's inclination to the West as well as providing analyses with regards to foreign policy, during the interview.

[145] For a detailed and a technical book, see Weinbaum (1986).

[146] Though recently there has been a decrease in the amount of money being provided as well as dissenting views being voiced within the US with regards to providing aid to the Egyptian military, the institutional relations that have been established with the military continue to this day.

[147] For an outstanding study full of empirical data on the dynamics of the US-Egyptian alliance, see Brownlee (2012b).

[148] Egypt, which was ostracized from the Arab world in 1979 (Camp David) and was reaccepted in 1989, is still very distant to its old role as an arbitrator.

[149] In Cook's words "Egypt was justly rewarded for its participation in the Gulf War… [Gulf war] represented the high point in the US-Egyptian strategic relationship that Mubarak nurtured throughout the 1980s" (2012: 161-162); also see Amin (2011: 167-172).

military's close relationship with the US indicates that this may have been an interaction that has influenced the military's mentality and worldview. It is important to express, with regards to this point, that although anti-Israeli and anti-American views are expressed in the public opinion and the media, the close relationship between the majority of the military and the US has meant that at an institutional level it is impossible for Egypt to act either independently of, or else contrary to Israeli and American interests. According to (N. Mostafa personal communication, December 19, 2012), Mubarak was in constant need of assistance from the US in order to sustain the regime. She argues that since Mubarak had no vision but to stay in office, Egyptian foreign policy has turned out to be somewhat of a reflection of the US's requests. This was particularly clear in Egypt's policy towards Israel (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012). In a situation such as this, where dependency is at the utmost level, the regime and particularly the military are compelled to carry out a comprehensive cost benefit analysis whilst deciding upon what steps to take. Let us listen to A. Shubaky (personal communication, December 25, 2012) in this regard:

> The equipment, arms and everything came from the US to the military. So, the military has a rational calculation concerning the relations with Israel and the US. We can maintain a radical discourse in the newspapers "Uskut siyoniyya! or "hayya alel cihad!" but we are not ready to pay the price. Who will pay the price? The army… Then you have to calculate everything very well.

US-Egyptian relations can be described as "strategic", both in terms of their effect on shaping the wider Middle East as well as for domestic Egyptian politics (Brownlee, 2012). They have played a key role in reshaping the international environment in the Middle East, and to some extent beyond. Additionally, bilateral cooperation has served the interests of both sides. Over the past three decades US-Egyptian cooperation has advanced the interests of both countries and has served as one of the major forces for stability in the Middle East.[150]

[150] Starting from the beginning of the 21st century, the US-Egyptian coalition has shown signs of losing energy and momentum. A major reason for this development is the growing gap between US and Egyptian perceptions of the security and strategic challenges in the Middle East, particularly after the events of 9/11. For more information see: Aly (2006); Cook (2012: 217-272).

US officials have employed a variety of diplomatic tools to push for reform, not only in Egypt, but also in the Arab world (Yaseen, 2011: 223-229). The US has expanded its foreign aid and democracy promotion activities in Egypt (Rutherford, 2008: 9-14). In 2005, the State Department's MEPI began distributing small grants directly to NGOs in Egypt to support secular political activities and human rights groups, particularly during the presidential and parliamentary election periods. The US respected the Egyptian governments' desire to block illegal Islamist organizations from officially participating in US sponsored reform activities in Egypt or from having extensive contacts with US diplomats in Cairo. Nevertheless, the US did not publicly reject having any contact with MB members.[151] According to the US State Department, the US would not deal with the MB since it was banned under Egyptian law, but MB members would not be banned from meetings between US officials. In this regard, Mr. Carpenter, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, stated that:

> There is recognition that there are a number of folks who have been elected to parliament, and they are there. This is an issue for Egyptian society to deal with; it is not something for the US to involve ourselves with (cited in Sharp, 2006).

After looking at the above general characteristics of Egyptian foreign policy, one could state that such a foreign policy approach and an integration of whatever sorts with the world, has had several consequences in terms of the present study (*political openness*).

First, this process led to Egyptian dependency on the West. It is important to remember that while Western actors support countries that behave in a manner that conforms to their interests, when they realize that their interests may be in jeopardy, they can easily withdraw their support. Western actors are able to easily withdraw their support from the leader or head of state as they generally establish their alliance at the institutional level. In the Egyptian case, the main actor that is in close contact

[151] My personal observation in Washington DC, 2007-2008 and a personal conversation with Marina Ottoway in DC.

with the West, namely the US, is the army.[152] It should be noted that Western actors have also realized that they cannot ignore the people's demands any longer and that they need to act in harmony with the public. Thus, it can be argued that these powers have avoided behaving recklessly in the Egyptian case as they did in Iraq. This particular subject is going to be evaluated in the next section where the US's approach to street politics will be discussed.

Secondly, in the final analysis, relations with the West make the Egyptian political system more open and more politically conscious (political consciousness), perceptive and responsive. In fact, particularly during the last decade there was close contact between the Egyptian people and different international institutions. Inevitably, relations with the West led to a structure that is more open to the world at large and more responsive to changes abroad. The fact that even the MB, one of the groups most ostracized by the Egyptian regime, has contacts with Western actors can be cited as an example here. Moreover, a society that is relatively better integrated with the West will clearly be more affected by global trends. It is also true that the Egyptian people who frequently visit Western capitals and are educated in the West have consequently developed a more politically outspoken discourse.[153] Interview data suggests that nobody could have foretold that even though millions of Egyptians live and work abroad and have travelled to Europe, their children would grow up a restless generation that want a share in what is going on in Egyptian politics (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). The sheer fact that a university such as the American University in Cairo (AUC) has been established in Cairo and successfully provides education is on its own a crucial indicator of the society's openness to the world.[154]

The 2000's was a period in which Mubarak's Egypt was increasingly integrated into the world economy in terms of trade. During this period Egypt signed several trade agreements, such as the EU-Egypt Association Agreement (2004), the Agadir

[152] S. E. Ibrahim was in the US during the uprisings. I will refer to his meetings with president Obama and the officials from the state department in chapter VII.
[153] Within this context, another important development that took place during the last 30 years is that many Egyptians had the opportunity to travel abroad either as migrant workers, tourists, students or for medical reasons. Close to 30 million Egyptians travelled abroad during the 1970-1990's.
[154] Personal observation during my visits to AUC in the last five years.

Agreement (2007), the Egypt-Turkey Free Trade Agreement (2007) and the Egypt-EFTA Free Trade Agreement (2007), with the goal of increasing Egypt's foreign trade volume (Hecan, 2016). These efforts have proven useful for increasing the share of foreign trade in the country's GDP. As an indicator of the deficit in foreign trade, while the share of foreign trade in the GDP stood at 39% in the year 2000, before the global crisis in 2008 this same number had risen to 72%.[155] The reforms adopted during the Mubarak era have allowed Egypt to better integrate itself into the world economy and have consequently enabled Egypt to attain notable rates of growth during the 2000's, also causing a significant rise in the amount of foreign investment in the economy (Hussein, n.d).

Thirdly, relations with the West or with the democratic world, in one way or another inhibit Egypt's leaders' ability to use violence against their people. Thus, the leaders of Egypt were not left to their own devices when approaching their citizens. Furthermore, they are not part of an international alliance (world order) like Iran or Russia where deploying violence against citizens is tolerated. Thus, while the Western countries may condone or even support violence when their own interests require (Brownlee, 2012), they will not let violence escalate past a certain point, especially if the society clearly demonstrates a *united* attitude against the regime (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). In a situation such as this, not opting to side with the people may also harm the credibility of Western actors. The following part (chapter VII) will discuss the US's influence as one of the main determinants in the military's decision to refrain from using bullets against the people at the demonstrations in Tahrir Square.

As previously mentioned, while their genuineness can be disputed, many Western actors acting under the leadership of the US have exerted intense pressure for reforms in Egypt, especially during the second half of the 2000s. This state of affairs has forced regimes to make reforms –though mostly superficial - so as not to lose Western support (Arafat, 2009: 103, 105-122). In other words, interview data suggests that the regime eventually found itself obliged to amend its policies and lightly loosen its control over the system. Persistent pressure coming from the West,

[155] This data was calculated with the help of the data retrieved by the World Bank.

particularly the US is one of the strongest factors pushing the regime to make more reforms, if not democratize (Rubin, 2006).

These factors have shaped one dimension of Egypt's 'political opportunity structure', thus creating a more open polity. This point will emerge more clearly in the concluding chapter which will compare Egypt and Syria. In regards to foreign policy approaches, the Camp David Accords signed with Israel play a key role in terms of Egypt's relationship with the West. At the same time, interview data suggests that this agreement also appears to be a factor that hinders the regime's legitimacy and makes the regime's approval less valuable in the eyes of its people.

4.1.6 Corrupted Economy and Privileged Circles

Moore (1993: 418), who emphasizes the importance of the bourgeoisie with his statement "no bourgeoisie, no democracy", actually means that the bourgeoisie is one of the most prominent forces in politics and should be strong and democratic in order to balance state power and push for political reform (Also see Hinnebusch, 2000: 123-145; Springborg, 1989: 45-94). In this regard, Arafat (2009: 140) clearly presents the dynamics of the close relationship between the ruling elite and the business circles and its consequences as follows:

> The cohesive alliance between Egypt's anti-democratic business and ruling elites blocks the potential bourgeoisie force in Egypt. Yet all is not lost. The Egyptian business class is a main ally of the regime, in many ways resembling the system of "oligarchic capitalism" (Sestanovich, 2004: 32) in Russia. Therefore any serious political and economic reform would closely monitor the relationship between them, and the fault line would appear when the business community realized that the regime is ready to collapse.[156]

In fact, the title of this section could have been "The Business of Politics", like the term Arafat used (2009: 61-85). This is due to the fact that we are looking at a politics that is being conducted in terms of interest and especially where vested economic benefits are prioritized and a thoroughly institutionalized and deep rooted

[156] For further analyses see Kheir-El-Din (2008); Amin (2011: 21-45); Hassan (2012: 74-76); Salim (2011).

corruption has reached its zenith (Sid-Ahmed, 2004; Yaseen, 2011: 329-333). Arafat (2009: 84-85) reiterates that:

> Political considerations have pushed the regime to encourage businessmen to run for parliament, while economic reasons have motivated businessmen toward the same goal. This mutual understanding tamps down clashes between the regime and the businessmen, as both parties appreciate their interdependency. The regime wants to build a coalition with business by using corruption to obtain hegemony over them, and businessmen want political immunity to create new investment opportunities and a mass personal fortunes.

Interview data suggests that the feelings of depravity and ostracization that have resulted from this situation have damaged social solidarity and harmony as negative sentiments have accumulated over time. The problems listed above were in Lesch's words "symptomatic of the government's lack of strategic thinking, with ministers focused on showing loyalty to the president, not on public service" (2012: 31). After the economic growth and reforms of the last two decades, Egypt experienced an expansion of the middle class and a shift to a market economy in the mid-1970s (Hinnebusch, 2001b). With this shift, the private sector began to control 73 percent of the whole economy by the 2000's. As a result, more than half of Egypt's public companies have been privatized.[157] These developments led to a rise in the power of the working class and an increase in their influence if not involvement in decision-making processes (Aly, 2012: 27; Beinin, 2012: 92-106).

Another problem the country is facing has to do with the crony capitalist structure which is directly related to the country's corruption. Egypt ranks 98th out of 178 countries according to the corruption index compiled by Transparency International (2010: 12). A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013) defines Egypt's crony capitalism problem as follows:

> Particularly in the last 10-15 years of the rule of Hosni Mubarak, the business community played a role in making the will of Egypt and also gained a lot of will and influence. This was one of the features of the previous regime

[157] 99, 9 % of agriculture, 85 % of manufacturing 89 % contractors, 99 % of tourism, 96 % of real estate was done by the private sector.

> [Mubarak regime] but this itself tremendously affected the credibility of the regime because it imposed or decided the priority, economic priorities where the poor people lost. So the business community gained a lot of influence and money but poverty continued to haunt the whole country.

Many parliament members in the Mubarak period were privileged and powerful businessmen seeking more benefit. Muhammad Abu al-Amin, a party member and businessman, alleges that businessmen were entering parliament during this period in order to obtain legal impunity and power (Arafat, 2009: 71). Some even argue that becoming an MP is one of the best investments one could make in the country. To provide another example, some have expressed the view that each 1 million pounds spent during the elections will be returned tenfold to the businessmen who invest in politics (Lesch, 2012: 26). Since 2008, 19 commissions specifically dedicated to financial matters have been headed by businessmen. For example, the head of the *Commission for Industry and Energy Commission* was Hosni Mubarak's cousin, Amin Mubarak (Arafat, 2009: 75-76; Lesch, 2012: 30).

Although the first steps towards a transition to a free market economy were taken during the Sadat era, the liberal reforms that have helped Egypt integrate itself into the world economy were made by Hosni Mubarak, who took power after Sadat's assassination in 1981. As a result of the economic reform and institutional agreement treaties signed during the early 1990's with the IMF, World Bank and the US, among others, Egypt undertook several reforms primarily based on privatization, the freeing of foreign trade and prices, new regulations with regards to banking, and insurance and capital markets (Hecan, 2016; Hinnebusch, 2001b; Pfeifer, 2012: 203-223). In this way the Egyptian economy was able to transition to a planned economy which meant the state would play a significant role in a free market economy. Scholarly works and the interview data suggests that the neoliberal policies that were adopted have generally benefitted individuals that have in general gathered around Hosni Mubarak; primarily Gamal Mubarak, close relatives, businessmen and top military members. Although this situation created a positive atmosphere for the wealthy, the concentration of wealth at the top of society did not trickle-down to the rest of the 85 million Egyptian people. This caused an environment of general unrest at the lower levels, especially for the poorer sections of the society. Interview data suggest that

this increasingly unjust way of sharing wealth and distributing income with rising democratic demands was another underlying cause of the uprisings that led to Hosni Mubarak's downfall on January 25, 2011.

The domination of both political and economic life by businessmen led to polarization among different strata of society. In Egypt, a minority of less than 5% controls the wealth and executive authority, while the lower strata grow tired of poverty and living below the poverty line.[158] While the elite executives were enjoying many privileges, the general population was living in poor conditions. According to the numbers of the Human Development Index 2010, Egypt ranked 101th out of 169 countries (Glennie, 2010). A staggering 97 % of Egypt's 80 million people have been jammed into a 33,000 km^2 along the coast of the Nile, while 50% of the society has an income of less than 100 dollars per month (Dinçer & Coşkun 2011).

4.2 From Traditional Opposition to a New Kind of Protest Movement

The previous section has attempted to provide a picture of the basic structure of the Egyptian state and the mechanisms of social control with reference to the relevant literature. Now we will look at how this structure has affected society. Taking all of the above into consideration, the type of social structure and perception that was formed as a result of the policies historically adopted by the predominant center is important in terms of understanding the reasons behind the society's discontent and reactions to the authority. One could argue therefore, that in states where the state's institutions have become dysfunctional as a result of inner decay, an environment of corruption (M. al-Gallad, personal communication, December 17, 2012; Bradley, 2008: 168)[159] and desperation (Bradley, 2008: 169-200)[160] takes hold of the society

[158] Nader Fergany (2007), the lead author of the Arab Human Development Report wrote in the *Financial Times* that "one percent controls almost all the wealth of the country". For another work on poverty see Kheir-ed-Din & el-Laithy (2008: 13-52); M. M. Akef (personal communication, December 20, 2012)

[159] M. al-Gallad (personal communication, December 17, 2012), the editor in chief of the Egyptian daily al-Vatan, claimed that there was a corruption-related case reported every two minutes, but that only 10 % of these cases saw any consequences for perpetrators. An interesting account on daily based corruption in Egypt see Bradley (2008: 147-168); Yaseen (2011: 141-145).

[160] In the system, where nepotism prevails over meritocracy, the people did not hold a belief that they could increase their social status through hard work. The fact that people have been promoted or installed in certain positions independent of their level of education or accomplishments has curbed the aspirations of those who work for change.

while at the same time invoking major reactions. Even though Egypt's ethnic and religious social structure is largely homogenous (Hopwood, 1993: 161-182), as a result of the impervious and corrupt system that has spread throughout Egyptian society, there has been significant polarization, estrangement, and fragmentation between the rich and the poor while the middle class has been largely segregated from these two (Yaseen, 2011: 165; Lynch, 2014: 7).[161] As a result of the authoritarian strategies that prioritize the ruling elite's interest, the divide between the rich and poor has become painfully obvious throughout the country (Cook, 2012: 181-184). For instance, gated communities like *Rehab*[162], were constructed by the rich (Hassan, 2012: 75) while urban infrastructure decayed and informal housing burgeoned.[163] As stated in Sims' piece, two-thirds of the residents of Greater Cairo[164] lived in unplanned areas without basic utilities and public services (2010: 83, 95, 106; Lesch, 2012: 31).[165] As it is stated by Cook (2012: 183), "the differences between the Egypt of City Stars and the Egypt of *Duweiqa*[166], as well as the preferential treatment of government officials and the well connected, produced a hotly contested political debate".

Interview data suggests that given the power and the control granted the state as a result of the "severe restrictions on gatherings as a result of the state of emergency" and the deployment of violence by the security apparatus, Egyptians, particularly the older generation, were afraid and hesitant to protest.[167] When this limited capacity to resist was added to the society's social and economic problems, the patience of the Egyptian people was pushed to a limit. Additionally, a large section of the Egyptian

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[161] In this respect, an activist writing at the *Masry al Yevm* newspaper has said that: "Before the revolution we were not taking the poor people seriously, even insulting them and they were labeling us as foreigners. With the revolution however, we began to get to know each other (T. Heikal, personal communication, December 21, 2012)"

[162] Rehab is one of the newly constructed satellite cities around Cairo. It is almost impossible to find a regular Egyptian in those cities. Mostly wealthy Egyptians live in these cities which resemble American towns. My observation in Rehab in December 2012.

[163] My personal observations in 2005 and 2012 confirm this divide.

[164]For seminal books on Cairo and the urban life in Greater Cairo see Singerman (2006); Singerman (2009); Sims (2010).

[165] My personal observation in 2005 and 2012. The population is intensified around two cities. This situation indicates that rural to urban migration continues. This movement of people has brought about unemployment, infrastructure problems and a housing crisis. Especially in Cairo, in the area named "Old Cairo [*al-Qahirah al-Kadimah*]", there are millions of Egyptians living in graveyards. Many of the inhabitants of such areas are not even registered with the state.

[166] An impoverished district of Cairo.

[167] Several interviews with Egyptians in 2005 during the very first days of the Kefayah movement gatherings.

social base does not benefit from the country's economic gains and lives in poverty. In spite of this economic hardship, interview data suggests that the primary demands made by the people have been to decrease the authorities of the president, removing the power of the executive from the legislative branch and the courts, the holding of free and fair elections and the increasing liberties.[168] Coming into the late 1990's and the early 2000's, what Mubarak failed to note was that there was a new generation (Korany, 2010: 2)[169] that had no particular appreciation for the social contracts of either Nasser or Sadat. Also they had no memory of the colonizers and were therefore lacking the same nationalist sentiments that had allowed previous rulers to gain support for their policies based on nationalism. Personal accounts of people living in Cairo at the time provide important clues as to the gravity of the situation. Additionally, Egypt had not provided quality education to its youth which also paved the way for a sense of discontent (Yaseen, 2011: 11-20).[170] The regressing quality of public health and education systems and rising food prices implied that the majority of the population could not afford private hospitals and schools and only two percent of the budget was allocated to the health sector (Lesch, 2012: 31; Darwish, 2007: 10). Within this atmosphere the new generation started to search for an entity that could fulfill the 'social contract' long neglected by the state. In S. E. Ibrahim's words:

> A generation that grew up used to globalization, the Internet and blogging. Such things went into the making of this generation. This generation did not obtain its information from state sources or traditional sources for that matter. Rather, they had access to a wide-open public space to be eclectic. This is why these were very important developments that Mubarak did not appreciate (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

Alaa al-Din Arafat, a very prominent scholar in Egyptian politics, accurately foresaw the principle dynamics and means that would be the main advantages/opportunities

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[168] Personal communication with prominent opposition figures in Egypt such as G. Ishak (December 26, 2012); A. Shubaky (December 25, 2012), M. M. Akif (December 20, 2012)

[169] In B. Korany's words, this is a kind of "steady, almost unnoticeable, but cumulative change" (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

[170] Factors such as the deficiencies of the system, crowded classes and the lack of qualified teachers have inhibited education from attaining a desirable level. Corruption is pervasive throughout the country with bribery becoming necessary to survive, even to take care of simple tasks in places such as Al-Azhar University. My personal observation in 2005.

for the opposition movements in the upcoming years and particularly during the uprisings of 2011 in his comprehensive book on Mubarak's leadership which was published in 2009. His introduction sentence to the chapter entitled "On the Bright Side" says it all in regards to these advantages/opportunities:

> Emerging pro-democracy forces have four advantages –the Internet, satellite TV, mobile phones, and blogs- that will impact Egyptian society in the coming years. These tools feed a change dynamic that erodes traditional authority structures in families, society, culture, religion and also the state, thereby creating pressure for reform. They will change dynamics that have been accepted for generations, and they will increase political consciousness as the government loses the ability to control information (2009: 157).

Initially, the younger generation used to seek to have the new social contract focusing only on individual personal freedom (Shehata, 2012: 105-124). They would soon discover, however, that their personal freedom and the ability to express themselves could only reach a certain level because of the political climate, political restructuring of the deep state as well as the lack of imagination and vision within the regime.[171] Interview data suggests that their personal freedom was directly linked to "the regime's inability to give the youth a 'project' that would be fulfilling for them and allow them to apply themselves" (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). In other words, it can be asserted that the new generation is more aware of and interested in political life than the previous generation (Leyla, 2012: 25; Arafat, 2009: 161). For S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 12, 2012), the combination of these and other factors resulted in a restless generation in Egypt.

As a result of a lack of political involvement, street demonstrations began to occur, mostly led by middle-class youth, during the late 90's. Meanwhile in the slums the number of poor people was on the rise. Interview data suggests that some of the politically and socially conscious middle-class youth would make reference to the

[171] Personal communication with a young activist, Cairo. In the process prior to the revolution, it is not possible to talk of a privately owned, independent media. In fact only 10 percent of existing newspapers, magazines and television channels were privately owned. In such an environment, the lack of platforms where one could express one's opinions freely was also another primary problem for people. For the problems in the media prior to the revolution, see Yaseen (2011: 227-231).

social agenda during these protests. These demonstrations became a way for the youth to work towards self-fulfillment and work for something that gave them a purpose. A young activist points out:

> We did not listen to the previous generation. What they had in their memory was the torture and the things that had happened to them and their friends. We had not experienced that but the difference is that we had bigger numbers, we are the majority of the country at the moment, it is difficult for the Mubarak system to be able to handle us (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

In parallel, reports that were being issued either by the UN or by the EU at the time noted the youth population during the early decades of the 21st century as being the biggest in Egypt's history (UNDP, 2010; Shehata; 2012: 107). In S. E. Ibrahim's words:

> The biggest in history because it will not repeat itself even in the future. For the first and last time we have this unprecedented youth power. It will get smaller as this youth grows older but in the last two decades of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century you will have that big population bulk (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

Aly (2012: 26) argues that this was, ironically, a result of Mubarak's success in reducing infant mortality. Additionally, life expectancy in Egypt had increased by 25 percent during the previous two decades (Denis, 2012: 237). Both of these factors resulted in a "youth bulge" (Aly, 2012: 26). This young population, as previously stated, can be characterized as more educated, more globally conscious, and more restless but with no outlet for their frustration (Arafat, 2009: 161). A young activist, Georges (personal communication, December 25, 2012), argues that:

> The main motive was to have a different Egypt of course and I studied in Europe, I know how the society is. I went to Turkey, for example I have a Turkish friend, a very good friend of mine. I remember when I was in Istanbul; he took me to one of these big demonstrations in Kadikoy. And I was amazed by the big masses of people. And he told me "you don't have this in Egypt?" I said no, the maximum will be 100 or 200. And all this experience made me think that Egypt also could become something like this.

The demonstrations that began in the late 1990's and continued into the early 21st century were initially for political reasons and attracted very small crowds (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012).[172] A. Makhfuz (personal communication, December 15, 2012), a young activist, expressed the conditions as follows:[173]

> You are restless and your restlessness is initially for political reasons but then you discover other avenues to explain why you are frustrated and you begin to talk about the social agenda and cultural agenda and so on. There was a gradual convergence; people were beginning to see that there is more to life than this or that. That when you go abroad you find a different lifestyle and discover more outlets that you do not have back home. Even if you do not travel, you hear from your colleagues or you read on the internet or you have been exposed to such things through the movies. Actually, all kinds of new media have contributed to this.[174]

Therefore, demonstrations against the regime did not really start against the regime (Schemm, 2012: 85-91). It can be argued that they began with motivation stemming from regional developments such as the invasion of Iraq (Arafat, 2009: 162). In Lesch's words "in 2000-2002, the Palestinian Intifada and Israeli re-invasion of the West Bank rekindled political activism that culminated in demonstrations in 2003 in Tahrir Square against the US invasion of Iraq" (Lesch, 2012: 32; Also see Lynch, 2014: 7; Shehata, 2012: 109). Indeed, interview data confirms that the attitudes of regional actors, regional and global developments, and the steps taken by external actors have also incidentally provided Egyptians with a political opportunity. The founders of the Kefayah movement, the March 9th movement, and the April 6th youth movement "were inspired by those demonstrations" (Lesch, 2012: 32). Particularly activists in Kefayah "movement were encouraged by anti-war and university based street mobilization and concerned about the upcoming presidential

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[172] Demonstrations grew up from 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 to 10,000, by the late 90's. In the years 2000-2001 this was the average size of the demonstrations. At the upper end, close to 10,000 is when the Muslim Brothers began to participate.

[173] I would like to express my gratitude to S. E. Ibrahim for introducing me to his team at the Ibn Khaldun Center. I would also like to mention the activists and researchers at this center who helped in better comprehending the above mentioned generation and media issues.

[174] Abdulla (2010: 59-85) highlights the importance of communications media and their evolution over the last twenty years from the impact of CNN to the emergence of Arab satellites, the Internet and blogging.

and parliamentary elections" (Lesch, 2012: 33; Also see G. Ishak, personal communication, December 26, 2012). In other words, the 2000's hosted the largest number protests to occur in Egypt in the last couple of decades, during which a huge number of activists participated.[175] Interview data suggests that once they were mobilized, they were then able to quickly gather when the need arose. This is called, as S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 12, 2012) reminded me, 'fungibility' in social sciences, or a deployable force. The youth began to feel the power that they wielded. In other words, the word "self-confidence" gradually started to find a permanent place in the colloquial dictionary of Egyptians.[176] In Arafat's words "the traditional limits have officially been broken on who may speak in public and what is proper to say, or even think, regarding the social, moral, and political orders" (2009: 162).

This new wave of protest that featured young people[177] as an effective force has refused to abide by the balance of power that the traditional opposition habitually took into consideration, specifically in the way their leadership is formed and carries out tasks (Shahin, 2005; Arafat, 2009: 157-184; Lynch, 2014: 7). It should be noted one more time that the regime's strict security has paralyzed the traditional opposition while the economic hegemony of Gamal Mubarak's inner circle of business associates has caused a new kind of protest movement on the streets of Egypt. The protests succeeded in incorporating different aspects of the society including workers, judges, lawyers, academics and students (Ahmed, 2012: 7). Furthermore, this new protest movement gained popularity amongst the people, and succeeded in attaining the –albeit limited- participation of the traditional opposition. The movement especially avoided ideological rhetoric in order to gain popular support (T. al-Kholi, personal communication, December 20, 2012; G. Ishak,

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[175] For an outstanding account on the street politics in Egypt see el-Ghobashy (2011); As noted by el-Ghobashy, The Land Center for Human Rights has shown that "a nearly fivefold increase in worker agitation between 2000 and 2008" was witnessed.

[176] For instance, the first (December 2002) Arabic petition against the *tawrith* of Gamal Mubarak "No to hereditary rule in Egypt" was posted on the Internet and gathered over 1,000 signatures in a month (Arafat, 2009: 161).

[177] In Lesch's words "in parallel to these figures the World Bank estimated that a third of Egyptians lived with less than two dollars a day. Poverty and unemployment, unequal access to education, lack of housing and transportation, long periods of waiting for marriage, and the lack of political participation or involvement in public service were among the major problems that the new Egyptian generation had suffered" (Lesch, 2012: 31; also see UNDP, 2010: 2-8); Assaad (2008: 133-178); Kholoussy (2012: 272-279).

personal communication, December 26, 2012). On this matter, T. al-Bishry's diagnosis is especially noteworthy:

> Mubarak has not only weakened the state mechanism but also undermined all forms of dissidence that existed during his time. This is because dissidence/resistance had become fundamentally elitist and party-based. Furthermore, he has also attempted to subsidy all existing civil society institutions and has succeeded in doing so. When these institutions stood up to defy him, they were unable to muster a sizeable political gathering in terms of popularity (personal communication, January 2, 2013; also see Langohr, 2004: 181-204).

From a different point of view, it is worth noting that another factor pushing the youth towards these non-traditional protest movements has been the Egyptian government's policy of oppression. In an effort to control universities, the state began to alter laws regarding student elections, and instituted a mechanism of automatic appointment of student leaders as opposed to elections. This enabled security forces to monitor and control student leaders. These policies were rejected by young people taking part in political work in universities, and caused young people to take to the streets in order to organize (mobilize) the non-traditional protest movement that arose prior to the revolution (S. E. Ahmed, personal communication, December 13, 2012).

Gradually, Egypt made a qualitative/cognitive jump and by the end of 2009-2010, they began to see more social unrest within "worker syndicates, trade unions, associations and so on" (Beinin, 2012: 323-350; el-Ghobashy, 2011). As Aly (2012) points out, this unrest had deep impacts on civil society. Over thirty thousand civil organizations emerged during the Mubarak era and they played important roles in the uprisings (Aly, 2012: 26). Two large centers where these unions were organized were the cities of al *Mahallah al-Kubra and Kafr al-Dawwar* (Beinin, 2012a). These are medium-sized cities with industrial working class populations and large populations. Interview data suggests that many times, whenever violence took place in these protests, this violence would simply fuel more protest. People discovered new opportunities. S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 12, 2012) tells of these opportunities below:

> In 2007, a girl at home just using the Internet called for strikes. When that call was responded to by millions of Egyptians, the state became very aware that there was something that they really could not control. This was a case of early and rough expressions of civil disobedience. She said: "Don't go to work. Stay home." At first the government didn't take this seriously. However to the surprise of everyone, including herself, something like 40 % of urban Egyptians who worked in industrial areas responded to her appeal. That is when the government began to take note that there is a new weapon that they cannot control. The government started taking note of the Internet, the bloggers[178] the communication. … So when this girl just tweeted or sent a message and people responded, they discovered a new weapon.

All in all, interview data confirms that generation matters. For instance, April 6 as a youth movement familiar with internet technology was organized effectively through online media (blogs, flicker, twitter, Facebook) and fostered hotly contested debates on sensitive issues whereas the older generation was very hesitant to express their minds, even online.[179] Michael Allen reported:

> To coincide with the NDP conference [2008], young activists launched a parallel cyber-conference to highlight and satirize the government failures. As the regime has stifled freedom of criticism, harassed journalists and sought to curb satellite TV, the web has become a vital outlet for expressing grievances and criticism of the regime –and confronting opposition elites (cited in Lesch, 2012: 34).

During 2004-2005, the first resistance and opposition movements began to emerge with many of the political elite openly joining in. Independently of this participation, strong popular movements with connections to factories, schools, other protest movements and solidarity groups were accompanied by hundreds of demonstrations and sit-ins organized within a single year (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013).

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[178] Egypt has the highest per capita number of bloggers in the world (Anderson, 2011a: 46).
[179] Personal communications with many young activists including T. al-Khouli (co-founder of the April 6th youth movement) and A. Zahran (an active and influential member of the Baradei youth group).

4.2.1 Milestones during the Last Five Years Prior to the Uprisings: An Increasing Political Mobilization

> *It was the Kefayah Movement in 2005; then the events in Mahalle al-Kubra in 2008. The unrest that occurred on April 6th in Mahalle lasted 2 years and during which people destroyed the photo of Mubarak. Subsequently, it was the fraud in 2010 elections. The NDP took 97 % of the seats and this was not the Egyptian style. It could have happened in Syria and in Iraq. Under Mubarak the Ikhwan got 88%, and 35 deputies from other political parties in 2005, but in 2010 it was really catastrophic, under the management of a corrupted businessman, Ahmad Ezz. They eliminated all the opponents: the liberals, the Ikhwan, the Nasserists... This was also a very important turning point (A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012).*[180]

In an era of economic distress, where Mubarak was getting older (Aly, 2012: 33; Cook, 2012: 201) and his son was gaining political strength, a process of reform began in Egypt in 2003 and was undertaken within the context of America's Greater Middle East Project whose goal was to implement reform in Arab countries. This reform process engendered the Kefayah movement (representing the social elite) in December of the same year (Cook, 2012: 184-192; Arafat, 2009: 158-160). The start of political mobilization for the lower classes in the 2000s came with the emergence of the Kefayah movement, which had no previous history. It was a spontaneous gathering of a number of intellectual, civil and political figures (a coalition of professionals and activists) (el-Ghobashy, 2011). In this context the Kefayah Movement can be identified as the first non-traditional protest movement that emerged before the revolution. The fact that non-politicized intellectuals, such as Abdul Vahhab al-Mesiri and George Ishak, were present at the establishment of the movement and that these movements were structured in a way that included different political sensitivities, are among the features that distinguishes this movement from others (A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012). In other words,

[180] Indeed, A. Shubaky (personal communication, December 25, 2012) reveals the accumulation of experience which was necessary for the security breach in 2011 by referring to the significant events that occurred from 2005 to 2011. In Beinin's words "the cumulative effect of the workers' movement taught millions of Egyptians that it was possible to win something through collective action" (2012b: 106).

the movement succeeded in attracting leftists, Islamists, liberals and Nasserites who supported democratic reform (G. Ishak, personal communication, December 26, 2012). The movement succeeded in morally shaking and moving the citizens of Egypt within a relatively short period of time. As el-Mahdi says, Kefayah "breathed life into Egyptian politics" (2009a: 92).

4.2.1.1 2005: Extraordinary Political Mobilization as a Powerful Sign towards Uprising

In this regard, 2005 was a crucial turning point for Egyptian politics. In spite of the competitive presidential election, which was held for the first time (Cook, 2012: 173) in Egyptian modern history, and the relative success of the opposition in the parliamentary elections, the concentration of power, or the thinning of the center which was held together up until that point by the co-optation of different interests, accelerated in 2005. Interview data suggests that in 2005 political mobilization in Egypt reached a level that had not been witnessed since 1952. This mobilization was especially significant because, from the beginning, it took on a relatively democratic character (el-Mahdi, 2009b). The authorities claimed that "the parties behind these protests were isolated and that the protestors attempted to count on external forces and take heart by leaning on foreign elements", in reference to the US administration (Democracy Watch, 2005: 3). Despite this argument, there were enough objective facts which referred to internal causes and motives to explain what was going on in the country. El-Mahdi (2009b) argues that "changes in the political opportunity structure and relatively successful cultural framing and mobilizing structures pushed for the rise of this movement"

The year 2005 was a milestone for Egypt, both in terms of the political reforms that occurred (Q. Said, personal communication, January 3, 2013)[181], the constitutional amendments that were enacted, and the parliamentary and presidential elections that were held. If one considers that at as of then the last constitutional amendment to occur was enacted in 1980 under Anwar Sadat, the significance of these events

[181] These reforms were big changes as a result of the pressure coming from the people and the international system.

becomes clearer.[182] A. Shubaky (personal communication, December 25, 2012), who is one of the founders of the Kefayah movement while simultaneously working as a politician and a well-respected scholar, describes 2005 as a turning point. He expresses this as follows:

> Before the Kefayah, we were talking about the regime, the government, but we rarely thought of taking Mubarak himself, his family and Gamal as targets. With the Kefayah we said clearly that the source of all of problems are Mubarak and his son. Kefayah was a turning point for this reason (personal communication, December 25, 2012).

Along with external influence, the increasing and insurmountable opposition of the people was a factor that allowed them to push through such reforms (Dunne, 2006) and achieve mobilization. A flurry of political reform measures were implemented by Mubarak and the NDP due to the growing criticism at home and abroad. However, these measures took place within carefully controlled guidelines (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012; Also see el-Amrani, 2012. 149-159). In other words, just a few of these measures might have led to democratization in the long run (Arafat, 2009: 121). Yet, in the end, interview data suggests that this discourse of reform encouraged people and provided opportunities for them to raise their voices. The mobilization of the many dissident groups formed a considerable force. It is for this reason that the collective opposition movement which tried to organize and rally the people is befittingly named "al-Kefayah", meaning "Enough". The Kefayah movement aimed to spread social consciousness, in order to prevent Hosni Mubarak from being reelected in 2005 and stop his son Gamal Mubarak from becoming president (G. Ishak, personal communication, December 26, 2012; A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012). The Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which had long been the most prominent opposition movement in the country, also started to coordinate its own activities either in tandem with this organization. In fact, members of the MB were also among the founding members of the Kefayah Movement (G. Ishak, personal communication, December 26, 2012). The MB also chose to join the protests and, in turn, went into

[182] This amendment enacted by Anwar Sadat only served to consolidate the authoritarian system in the country, as it sought to remove the time limit on the term of the presidency. In Tamir Moustafa's words "this legal framework was critical to the process of controlled liberalization" (2007: 90).

the streets and in collaboration with Kefayah.[183] This change of strategy for the MB heightened the regime's fears, due to the MB's political and public weight, even while still being outlawed at that time (Democracy Watch, 2005: 3).[184]

Since conservative values are predominant in Egyptian society, the ostracization of Islamic oriented sections of the society has been one of the principle causes for the effectiveness of the MB at the social level (Sullivan & Abed-Kotop, 1999; Mitchell, 1993). Interview data suggests that their grassroots activism was also another important cause since the people were searching for a group to fulfill the state's abandoned social contract. For example, the MB and its syndicates found a space to maneuver at the civil society level (Wickhman, 2002: 93-118; el-Fenni, 2011). Partly because of the constraints on political life and civil society, "religious groups such as the MB were able to capitalize on widespread social grievances to recruit and mobilize young people in large numbers" (Shehata, 2011). Both globally and regionally, the Islamists have had a dynamic relationship with the outside world. It is important to stress the importance of the MB's relationship with the West. I personally learned from representatives of the MB, that the MB was in contact with certain officials in Washington DC through second track diplomacy channels in order to integrate itself into the political process, especially after 2003.

After 1984 when the MB began participating in elections with independent candidates, its most important arguments concerned democracy, the Palestinian issue, and economic issues (M. al-Samman, personal communication, December 8, 2012). One point to note while making observations about the MB, is that throughout the years it has been on a political learning curve. Furthermore, during the 1990's, the MB's activities in labor unions and its operations in university unions introduced the movement to the wider public and caused the regime to view it as a threat. During this process, the MB's candidates won the presidential election in the Doctors, Lawyers and Engineers Association (M al-Samman, personal communication, December 8, 2012).

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[183] My personal observation in 2005, Cairo.

[184] Observers hardly disagree over the belief that the pressure exercised by the US administration on the regime in Egypt has provided an appropriate atmosphere for the opposition to take advantage of the new regional and international situation and demand a number of political reforms and accelerate democratization.

Although officially banned since 1954, the MB's activities at the social level have been condoned by the administration during different points of the Nasr, Sadat and Mubarak administrations. These administrations have cooperated with the MB during periods of the regime's consolidation (Hassan, 2012: 86-90). Another factor to note is that since 1984, the MB has continually entered its candidates in the elections in alliance with secular parties (Wickham, 2013: 46-75). This has contributed to the movement's political learning process. MB leaders such as Abdel Mumin Futuh and Muhammed Habib, represented a moderate branch of Islam and became the representatives of different factions inside the MB.[185]

It is possible to talk of a civil society in Egypt, in terms of unions and different foundations and associations (Kandel, 2001: 361-398). Although there were limitations and pressures on the organizations making up the civil society, the fact that such civil society existed brought a breath of fresh air to both the opposition and the people who felt they had been deprived of their rights. Although this was not consciously planned, the existence of such a space was also an opportunity to mobilize people, raise awareness and attain foreign assistance. It should be underlined that "professional associations have a long history of street politics in Egypt; students, lawyers, journalists, and engineers are especially politics-prone" (el-Ghobashy, 2011).

4.2.1.2 The Role and Place of Judiciary in Egyptian Politics

Again in 2005, protests emerged within the judiciary that demanded a complete reform of the judiciary and full supervision of the election process.[186] The former State Council Vice President, Tariq al-Bishry, also participated in these protests against the electoral process with an article entitled "I Call upon You to Revolt", in which he openly invited the people to participate in civil disobedience.[187] In his

[185] For interesting insight on the MB see Thomson (2012). Youssef Nada is an exiled Egyptian and a well-known international figure who has been a member of MB for more than sixty years.
[186] For an analytical account of the judiciary's views with the regard to the four core elements of constitutionalism: rule of law, constraints on state power, protection of basic rights and public participation in governance, see Rutherford (2008).
[187] For a detailed analysis of al-Bishry's writings in terms of constitutional order, see Rutherford (2008: 77-130).

article, al-Bishry drew attention to the autocratic transformation of the regime and the threat of dissolution that the state's institutions faced (al-Bishry, 2007).[188]

Historically, like the military, the judiciary has also enjoyed a very positive reception in Egyptian society. Egypt's presidents, aware of the position of the judiciary (Salem, 2001: 97-118), were attentive to the need to obtain legitimacy by winning the support of the judges after the revolution of 1952. However, this situation was always confronted with desire of the judiciary to protect its independence from politics and the executive branch. One could say that the "vibrant and aggressive" judiciary in Egypt traditionally enjoyed a sort of autonomy (Rutherford, 2008: 2). The judiciary was confronted by the Presidency after the Chief Justice Abdurrezzak es-Senhur's adjudication to cancel some of the decisions made by the President Abdel Nasser following the July Revolution (Butros, 2012). As a result of this, Abdel Nasser gave a number of performances with the judiciary (al-Bishry, 2001: 49) and their effects caused some improvements to be made which remained until the January 25th revolution and in the process beyond. With the goal fighting the judiciary, Abdel Nasser dismissed a large number of judges who were charged with being against the revolution. The main reason for this decision was that the list of the regime (names supported by the regime) were defeated by the list of independent candidates in the *Judges Club (Nadi al-Quda)* elections. Independent candidates were opposed to any performance that could end in the loss of the independence of the judiciary against the legislative and executive branches (Vecih, 2012). Under these circumstances, the judiciary split into two opposing movements: the first was called the *Judicial Independence Movement* (JIM); the second movement was called the current executive. This clearly illustrates that the judiciary does not maintain a monolithic structure, which means that it is not fully dominated by the regime.

When Anwar Sadat came to power, the judges who were dismissed were reappointed in order to gain their trust. During Sadat's time in office, there was remarkable emphasis on the independence of the judiciary in the Constitution of 1971 (Surur, 2012). Soon after, however, the relation between Sadat and the JIM was negatively

[188] Independent personalities, who come from a leftist background with Islamic references have significant influence over large numbers of people. Counselor T. al-Bishry and M. Imara are the prominent ones.

affected due to a number of restrictive laws imposed upon the judicial branch ("Hiwar mea' Rıfat", 2010). In this regard, al-Bishry mentions that both Abdel Nasser and Sadat worked to fight against the judiciary (al-Bishry, 2003). The efforts of the executive authority to take control of the judiciary continued during the Mubarak's period (Dessouki, 2008: 277-284). During this period, the JIM continued to resist moves by the executive branch to establish dominance over the judiciary (Ghamroun, 2012). For example, between 2005 and 2006, some prominent names of the JIM were confronted by the executive authority because of their demand for full control in the elections (Moustafa, 2007: 188-198; el-Ghobashy, 2012a: 139-142).

All in all, the judiciary has tried somehow to reign in its independence from the president, and has done so in a continuous struggle (Rutheford, 2008: 32-76).[189] In other words "Egypt's judges have a long history of struggling for independence from the all-powerful executive branch" (el-Ghobasy, 2012a: 139). This was an important event in terms of the interactions among the institutions. The judiciary as a whole has never supported the regime and continually prevents the disintegration of the state. Interview data suggests that the stability and continuity of the state is more important than the regime's survival for those who have been supporting the autonomy of the judiciary (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013).

4.2.1.3 Increasing Public Debate about Democracy and Domestic Politics

Hosni Mubarak had continually expressed his desire to enact reform since 2004 and his appointment of Ahmad Nazif as a civilian prime minister gave the people cause for hope (Q. Said, personal communication, January 3, 2013). Nazif was young compared to the other political elite and he had led somehow a revolution regarding the prevalence of internet use while he was the minister of communication and as prime minister.[190] Internet was very cheap, may be Egypt was the cheapest country in the world. This development opened the door for communication and a relative freedom of the press (Q. Said, personal communication, January 3, 2013). Said

[189] Rutherford (2008), in the second chapter of his book, examines the historical foundations of Egyptian liberalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and observes that this conception of governance became tightly integrated into the development of the legal profession. He argues that lawyers and judges became the most dedicated advocates of liberal reform.
[190] 22.6 million Egyptians had internet Access in 2010. Egypt was first Arab State to use Facebook and 23rd in the world (Aly, 2012: 30).

points out that, starting in 2005, people began to talk about the Mubarak family[191] in different media outlets such as newspapers, internet and even in cinema (personal communication, January 3, 2013).[192] In Said's words:

> This did not exist before. They started to joke about them [Mubarak's family]… the lady and his son… This was the beginning. I think the opening of the media was a very important factor. People started to go out. It initiated with some young people and then continued with the workers and political groups. … It was also something new and covered by internet and media. For me, this technology of media was very important factor on the way towards the revolution (personal communication, January 3, 2013).

However, during Nazif's term in government, economic reforms excluding any political reform were pursued with no political liberalization in sight. On February 26th, 2005, Article 76 was amended in order to enable a multiple candidate system in the presidential elections. The new article stipulated that an individual who had served for at least one year on the executive board of a political party in the parliament with at least 5% representation could run as a candidate. In this sense, the article described word for word the only party that fulfilled these conditions, the NDP and its potential candidate Gamal Mubarak. In other words, the amendments (authored by Gamal's NDP Policies Secretariat) ensured that only the NDP could run for the presidency in the future (el-Amrani, 2012: 150-152). In spite of the fact that this change was only a part of a reform illusion, some people regarded the amendment of Article 76 as a sign of Mubarak's weakening grip on power and the starting point for public debate about democracy and domestic politics.[193] In Arafat's words "despite his [Hosni Mubarak] intention to manipulate political reform, ease foreign and domestic pressures, pave the way for his son, and ensure his regime's survival, the amendment actually revealed his fading power" (2009: 138).

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[191] Some argue that the media was the single largest reason for the uprisings, since the use of media paved the way for the delegitimization of the regime particularly on the issue of succession (Aly, 2012: 30).

[192] There were 54 television channels in June 2010, 31 of which were privately owned. In 2010, 70 percent of families had legal access to satellite TVs which was 48.3 % in 2008 (Aly, 2012: 30).

[193] Personal communication with various opposition figures. Also for a comprehensive work on the role of law in the Egyptian uprisings, see Moustafa (2011: 181-191).

In addition to these hardships, Hosni Mubarak was elected to another term in 2005 and the rumors that power would be handed over to his son Gamal Mubarak became more intense (A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012). Interview data suggests that this plan to hand over power to Gamal Mubarak proceeded in four axes. Firstly, negotiations with the MB, who had seats in parliament, commenced in order to ensure that they would not object to the hand over. Secondly, a constitutional formulation was devised that would only allow Gamal Mubarak to become president (Moustafa, 2011). Thirdly, attempts were made to ostracize certain individuals from the state bodies and parties who opposed Gamal Mubarak's accession to the leadership. Lastly, as an instrument to secure the transition of power from H. Mubarak to G. Mubarak, the latter was endorsed by the Minister of Interior at the time, Habib el-Adly (M. M. el-Zayat, personal communication, January 3, 2013).[194] Within this project, a new movement called New Thought emerged within the ruling NDP (Lesch, 2012: 20). This trend brought together, politicians who supported the project to hand over power to Gamal Mubarak and a group of businessmen who took advantage of the regime for their own interests (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

Regarding the latest presidential elections that took place in September 2005, the regime succeeded on two fronts. First, they secured Mubarak's election for a fifth term as president. Second, they achieved the first goal in a different way by placing him in power against the popular will and by not relinquishing any power to the people or elites (Kassem, 2006: 129-148). As a reflection of the reforms during the presidential elections that took place during the same year, the ruling party allowed for judicial oversight of the elections. Parliamentary elections in Egypt, which were held two months after the presidential elections, were a turning point in two areas of political life. While the ruling party prevailed in the elections, it seemed unable to translate its former popularity into votes for those it had on its parliamentary ballot. Although the ruling party enjoyed the majority of the vote at about 75 percent, the party's image was harmed after the MB group won 88 seats[195] despite reports of

[194]Habib al-Adly is among the most hated people in Egypt after Mubarak and his son since he was personally responsible for rampant torture and human rights violations in the prisons (Arafat, 2009: 194).
[195] They won 19.8 % of the seats which is a huge rise from 17 seats they had won in 2000 elections.

various instances of fraud (Arafat, 2009: 135). These elections yielded a total number of 121 opposition seats which is the highest level of opposition presence in the Egyptian parliament ever (Aly, 2012: 15-16). Regarding the fraud in the parliamentary elections, former general Q. Said (personal communication, January 3, 2013) states that the first and the second phases of the elections were correct but the third stage was corrupted. In Aly's words:

> The 2005 parliamentary elections were marked by a much higher number of irregularities… by violence… and by biased national media… Nonetheless, these elections were a departure in numerous respects from past parliamentary elections. They were the first elections conducted under judicial supervisions and with monitoring by civil society organizations; the first with transparent ballot boxes that could not be tampered with, and the first in which permanent ink was used… New traditions were thereby established along with a minimum set of standards that if violated in the future would carry a political cost[196] to the regime (2012: 15).

The fact that only around 23% of the population participated in the elections, despite the MB's call for participation, indicated how these reforms were far from being credible in the people's eyes (Arafat, 2009: 135). In spite of this, the MB's victory scared the regime, stoking its determination to prevent a similar outcome in the future (el-Mahdi, 2009a: 99). As Aly points out, the 2005 elections can be perceived as a return to domestic politics in Egypt.[197] He argues that foreign policy issues dominated the political discourse until 2005. Foreign policy subjects such as the Palestinian conflict, Iraq, and Egypt's relations with the US were the main themes dominating public discourse. However, the 2005 elections changed this trend and subjects like unemployment and constitutional reform became the top issues in Egyptian political discourse (Aly, 2012: 18-19).

Interview data suggests that the 2005 elections were an important breaking point in terms of their long-term effects. Yet, it is also noted that despite the gains made in the past 25 years, the president was still holding incredible power and that the existing system was incapable of responding to the needs of the country. As a result

[196] As we see later, this cost occurred in the 2010 elections.
[197] For decades, domestic political activity seemed useless. See el-Nagar (2011).

of this, constitutional reform became an important topic in the country's agenda (Yaseen, 2011: 77; Shahin, 2005: 2; Aly, 2012: 19). Therefore, the 2005 elections contributed to the formation of an unprecedented turn in Egyptian politics, when Egyptians began discussing domestic politics.

According to Aly (2012: 20), president of al-Ahram, one of the most important institutions in the old system of politics which was closely acquainted with the regime, the 2005 elections played an important role in highlighting three competing paradigms that would later affect Egypt's future: the bureaucratic paradigm (NDP and the state), the theocratic paradigm (Muslim Brotherhood)[198] and the democratic paradigm (liberals, globalized intelligisia, business community, middle class, media and civil society).

In this ever-increasing political mobilization process that started with Kefayah, the April 6th Youth Movement (2008), and the labor protests based around al-Mahallah al-Kubra were mentioned more and more frequently in the interviews. In 2008, Egypt witnessed worker strikes, known as the al-Mahalla al-Kubra Strikes and as a result, a new movement appeared called the April 6th Movement (T. al-Kholi, personal communication, December 20, 2012; Also see Cook, 2012: 178-179; Beinin, 2012b: 99-105). The majority of the members in this movement –despite some leaders' identifying the movement as democratic left- are young people of no political or ideological affiliation.[199]

In a short period of time, different components of the opposition began to emerge. Interview data suggests that America's persuasion, the political and economic impotence of the state and the disdain for Gamal and his team brought these people together.

[198] For an outstanding account on the situation of Muslim Brotherhood in the last decade of Mubarak, see Shehata and Stacher (2012: 160-177).
[199] The most prominent leaders of the April 6th Movement were: Tariq al-Khouli, Ahmed Mahir and Esma Mahfuz.

4.2.1.4 2010: The Peak of Arrogance among the Ruling Elite

The "youth bulge" (Korany, 2010: 4; Aly, 2012: 33), the expansion of the middle class, the rising role of the media, the inner decay of the state system and the Gamal effect all posed challenges to the Egyptian political system which could not grasp the changing realities of the country. Despite previous problems, it was the recent developments in last quarter of 2010 (Cook, 2012: 276) and the beginning of 2011 that were more conducive to the uprisings, as highlighted in my interviews (el-Bendary, 2013: 5). There are at least three significant points that deserve a closer examination in the period prior to the uprisings: the 2010 elections, the death of Khaled Saeed (Hassan, 2012: 234-236) and the Tunisian revolution.[200]

The scandal involved with the rigging of the 2010 parliamentary elections (Aly, 2012: 34; Q. Said, personal communication, January 3, 2013)[201] completely defeated any hopes young people may have had in terms of participating in the political life within the existing regime (S. E. Ahmed, personal communication, December 13, 2012). Commentators and my interviewees who observed the developments in Egypt were unanimous in their assessment that this was the single most important factor that led to the revolution (Lesch, 2012: 26; B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012; Aly, 2012; Cook, 2012: 278-281). Albrecht (2012: 259) considers these parliamentary elections as a "telling example of the regime's arrogance towards its people".

The results of the 2010 parliamentary elections were thought of merely as a competition between the ruling NDP and the MB. However, interview data suggests that the real struggle took place within the NDP, between those that supported the handing over of power to Gamal Mubarak and those that opposed the hand-over (S. Abdel Fettah, personal communication, May 4, 2013 ; Shehata, 2011). The military also joined the ranks of those who opposed Gamal Mubarak's leadership as he did not have a military background. On the other hand, this situation forced the majority

[200] The impact of the Tunisian revolution on the Egyptian protesters will be evaluated in the next chapter.

[201] The ruling NDP won 420 of the 518 seats in the parliament, while 53 of the 68 independent candidates who were elected also became members of this party. MB members who stood as independents could only win one seat. However, in the 2005 elections the NDP won only 330 of 454 seats while the MB won 88 seats.

of party members to either display a rejectionist attitude towards Gamal Mubarak's assumption of power –with the aid of the military- or take a pro-Gamal Mubarak position with the support of a lobby within the General Policies Commission of the Party, which Gamal Mubarak personally led. The pro-Gamal Mubarak movement not only consisted of politicians, but also found support among many businessmen who worked alongside senior officials in the Ministry of Interior.

As Lesch (2012: 26) expresses, the negative drive against Gamal reached its peak in the "2010 elections which consolidated the nexus of government, party, parliament, and crony capitalism". In parallel, 2010 was the most vital year according to many of my interviewees in terms of the uprisings in 2011. First of all, the regime's already familiar overconfidence became more obvious and the regime thought itself indestructible (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012).[202] The elections that took place in November were an indicator of this (Cook, 2012: 279).[203] A closer examination of the elections is necessary to understand their impact on the perceptions of the people who initiated the upheavals just two months later. Before the elections, Prime Minister[204] Ahmed Nazif exaggerated his power so much so that he went to forge the elections (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

The June 2010 Consultative Council and November 2010 People's Assembly elections were "orchestrated by NDP Secretary General of Organization Affairs Ahmed Ezz" (Lesch, 2012: 23).[205] As a result of both elections, neither opposition party was able to obtain 5 percent of the seats, which was a requirement for nominating a candidate to the then upcoming presidential election in September 2011. It is widely claimed by many commentators that "the regime's tactics in the 2010 elections were part of a broader plan to ensure smooth succession" for Gamal during the upcoming presidential elections in 2001 (Shehata, 2011). To crown it all, despite arrests and fraud[206], Gamal and Ezz "arrogantly" proclaimed the NDP's

[202] For Aly (2012: 34) the "NDP had no intentions of sharing power with any other political group".
[203] The government did not even try to make it look like a legitimate election.
[204] As Aly (2012: 4) underlined it should be noted that infighting also occurred in the cabinet.
[205] The NDP won 80 of the 88 seats contested in June, (4 seats for independents and 4 for opposition parties) completely shutting out the MB. Then the NDP along with the allied independent candidates won 97% of the General Assembly.
[206] Al-Shobaky (2010) called these elections the worst election in Egyptian history.

"crushing victory" in Lesch's words, and thus validated their plans for a new wave of neoliberal economic policies (2012: 24).[207] Gamal's blatantly obvious involvement in the process and his rising public visibility deepened the expectations that Gamal was to be the successor of his father, particularly following the deterioration of Hosni Mubarak's medical condition in spring 2010 (Lesch, 2012: 24; Aly, 2012: 33; Cook, 2012: 275). Gamal's showing on the political and economic platforms alongside Ezz's rapid ascent and their arrogant strategies made the rifts among the ruling elite more visible. An unnamed NDP parliament member commented on this, giving us a look at a general opinion on the duo's arrogance: "The stupid part is, we had the opposition inside the parliament under a covered roof. He [Hosni] took the opposition into the street" (cited in Lesch, 2012: 24; also see el-Ghobashy, 2012a: 132). That's why it was no surprise that protesters torched Ezz Steel's Cairo headquarters on 28 January 2011 (Fehim, Slackman & Rodhe, 2011).

This arrogance was a big mistake on the part of the regime. At this point let's hear how B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012) defines the situation as follows:

> It provoked people too much and also he [Ahmet Nazif] did something stupid. The objective was to change within the governing NDP. But his actions ended in a crude way, resulting in some people within the NDP being excluded, especially people living in the countryside. These people then worked against the governing party. I know people who phoned me and asked me why the NDP were excluding them. Mubarak wanted to install his own people. So the governing party was already cracking. He didn't realize that this affected very much the power of the regime. They were so overconfident that they didn't realize that the cracks could be much bigger than what they imagined. So that is one thing. This was of course in addition to all the differences between the elites that existed before. I could see that many people were not committed to the regime or the ideology of the regime rather; they were committed to their

[207] Also for a detailed piece on the political economy of Mubarak's fall in which the impact of those so called neoliberal policies are elaborated, see Soliman's chapter in the same volume. He adopts a political economy focus to examine how the fiscal crisis led to the system's fragmentation (2012: 43-62). Also see Cook (2012: 280).

> interests in the regime. Obviously when you see this you can realize that one's interests can shift very quickly. They are too flexible.

In the same vein, Anderson (2011a: 46) also points out the tendency towards flexibility among the Egyptian elite by arguing that "… even the remnants of the old regime, are trying to figure out how to maneuver into a position where they do not lose everything, where they can see a role for themselves in a new Egypt". In short, the regime's overconfidence was obvious to the Egyptian people and had manifested itself in various examples over the last 10 years. In 2010, there were an average five protests a day (Aly, 2012: 36). The fact that all my interviewees, without exception, when asked about the most important event leading up to the revolution, answered "the scandalous events in the year 2010" (Aly, 2012: 2-3).[208] The police killing of Khaled Saeed provided people "a rallying point" (Aly, 2012: 34) against the regime (Cook, 2012: 280). His death and the protests against the regime "contributed to the growing discontent in the weeks leading up to the uprisings" (Aly, 2012: 35). Some sources view el-Baradie's return to the country as a turning point (Aly, 2012: 34). However, interview data does not suggest that Baradie's return held such a significance.

During this period, Egypt's political arena did not bear witness to the formation of any robust new parties apart from the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members were imprisoned for the most part. According to T. al-Bishry (personal communication, Janaury 2, 2013), at the end of the day the phenomenon that without question created a real people's revolution was the governance crisis. To briefly explain, what made this a governance crisis was that the opposition was incapable of taking power and the dominant group was incapable of governing the country.

A. E. Dessouki (personal communication, December 24, 2012) believes that the reason for the increasing mobilization in the Egyptian opposition and the final victory has less to do with the power of the popular movements and more to do with

[208] 2010 is the year of not only arrogance but political mobilization. Aly (2012) illustrates this mobilization among Egyptians by using the analogy of the higher circulation of opposition newspapers.

just the opposite, the decomposition and decay of the state[209], its inability[210] to comprehend the event unfolding around it and the fact that it had lost its ability to function. In the same vein but from a different angle, L. Anderson (1987: 219) emphasizes that "examination of political opposition reveals a great deal not only about the society in which it develops but about the nature of the political authority it confronts" which means that a closer look at political authority is prior to the opposition. Therefore, while researching the reasons for the success of the uprisings, it would be more appropriate to focus on the state's weaknesses, internal dynamics within the regime (Albercht, 2012: 251-270), and the opportunities it presented to the people. However, this should not mean that the author of these lines underestimates the role of the people's movements. Indeed, as Jenkins and Klandermas (1995: 4) point out, the state is the main factor shaping "the conflict and alliance systems" which actually form "the emergence and development of a social movement". They underline that the social movements acting upon political opportunities are also agents of political change. Put differently, they imply that the actions of the social movements, in turn, "help to generate new opportunities" (Jenkins & Kledermas: 1995: 4).[211]

Interview data suggests that the revolution would not have occurred if the inner decay of the state[212] had occurred without any mobilization on the part of the people. At the same time, the opposition alone could not have succeeded in staging the revolution if the state had not been in a severe state of decay. It was this political opportunity structure that gave the opposition the opportunity to mobilize. Thus, as Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 12) remind us:

> Political opportunity structure acts like an open door that protestors realized they can pass through- or a door they realize they are strong enough to push open. In this, political opportunity structure plays a double role: It is a process

[209] Tilly's (1975) analysis of collective violence in Germany, Italy, and France has also indicated that violence did not so much depend on the structural transformation of society, but was linked to shifts in the struggle for political power.
[210] As for Aly (2012: 33) there emerged a political vacuum which was filled by other corrupt personalities. Dealing with major issues (foreign or domestic) was bound to be postponed due to the inability of the system to make decisions.
[211] For them any proper discussion of the state and social movements must focus on both sides of this relationship.
[212] For a detailed insight why we focus on the state more while discussing the social movements see: Jenkins (1995: 16-17).

> factor that accounts for the chances of a protester's success. Just as importantly, it addresses the nagging problem of agency versus structure and acts like a bridge between the two to emphasize the impact of the protesters' role in influencing the political results of the struggle. The political opportunity structure model emphasizes the organic interaction between agency and structure.

Interview data suggests that the new generation was therefore more courageous than their parents. They became the driving force behind the first demonstrations of the 2000s that subsequently paved the way to the 2011 uprisings as a result of cumulative experience. Kriesi (1995: 168) argues that a political opportunity structure may shift over time as a result of the cumulative consequences of the purposeful actions of social movements. Any struggle or any fight for democracy goes through stages. The starting point for this in Egypt was the al-Kefayah movement and the emergence of the 'Kefayah sisters' other movements which are very close to Kefayah in essence but different and small groups such as the 9th of March, labor movements and some socialist groups. In the next stage, these groups started to talk to each other and tried to organize their stances and positions. In 2005 and 2006, even the dissident voices within the judiciary took to the stage just prior to the emergence of April 6th movement developed by young activists. Afterwards, interview data reveals that in 2010 three major things happened which motivated the Egyptian people to mobilize: Egyptian elections, the Tunisian Revolution and the death of Khalid Saeed in Alexandria. Eventually, these events echoed throughout Egyptian streets, not merely due to the movements but because of the government failure (A. Zahran, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

The general picture prior to the revolution in Egypt can be summarized in this manner. Since the problems were compounded over a long period of time and Egyptian internal political and social dynamics experienced a great transformation, particularly during the last decade (2000-2010), it was necessary to focus much more on the events of these last 10 years. The Egyptian people, who had been living in such a state of trauma and distress for a long period of time, saw the troubles of the state within the last 10 years as an opportunity, and were able to establish a movement against the regime through a coalition representing nearly all factions of

Egyptian society. When the pre-revolutionary period is evaluated, it is striking to observe that “Islamic elements” were not the only ones excluded from the regime and/or unhappy with Mubarak, and that an intense tension existed within state institutions (Aly, 2012: 34). In Ghobashy’s words “the reductive tendency to shoehorn all of Egyptian politics into a deadlock between the regime and the Islamist” would inevitably keep “many Egypt-watchers from noticing all the meaningful and the consequential forms of political expression unfolding across the country” (2012b: 121).

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN SYRIA

5.1 Syria as an Authoritarian State under Ba'ath Control

Syria is a diverse entity in terms of religious, sectarian, tribal and ethnic identities (Sahner, 2014). These ethnic and denominational differences have been the main source of continuous social tension in Syria since WWI (Van Dam, 2011: 17; Leverett 2005: 2).[213] Historically, those fighting for control of the region have exploited this rich diversity and provoked conflict. From the very beginning, many actors have been involved in the construction of the Syrian state. Throughout its imperial history, these social differences have been abused by its colonizers for their own benefit. As a result, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, France, England and Russia attempted to become patrons for the region's various religious and ethnic groups in order to utilize these minorities pursuant to their interests. These attempts subsequently upended the social balance of the region (Van Dam, 2011: 3-4). Following this period of invasion, imperial forces retreated, leaving behind political and social conflicts based upon their spread of anachronic hatred. These conflicts would fester, eventually triggering permanent disintegration within the Syrian state. This situation gave an international identity to regional problems. Further,

[213] 90% of the Syrian population consists of Arabs and the remaining 10% of Kurds, Armenians, Circassians and Turkmen people. The Arab majority in Syria is divided into sects. In the Syrian population, 74% are Muslim, 8% of which are Kurds. Therefore, 2/3 of Arabs in the country are Muslims. 16% of Syrians belong to Shiite Islamic sects with the Arab ethnicity, such as Alawites (Nusayris), Druze and Ismaili. Alawites are the most common among non-Sunni Muslims, with an estimated rate of 12-13%. Christians of various sects constitute 10% of the population. As for the small but historically rooted Jewish minority in Syria, they disappeared as a result of migration in the early 1900s. See Bailey and Bailey (2003. 190-194).

intervention by European powers paved the way for the deterioration of peace and the awakening of minorities as separatist, anarchic or political actors (Van Dam, 2011: 4). Even today, many political entities in Syria represent narrow regional, ethnic, and sectarian interests, with their supporters centered in specific geographic territories.

It is easy to observe how today's Syrian political groups have been formed via traditional social channels. Even in Syria's current political environment, the importance of sect, religion, region and tribal connections endures.[214] Groups often head for a contradictory and even destructive sub-identity, instead of choosing a constructive supra-identity. Such atomization, provoked by external elements, came to life due to the lack of an inclusive, constructive and powerful central authority to unify all identities. During the Ba'ath Period, Arab and nationalist discourses were dominant, forming the main basis for what they called social cohesion, but which were actually alienating and dividing (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014). These policies subsequently "entangled the country in the politics of pan-Arabism, the conflict over Palestine and against Western imperialism" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 96).

This social structure also resulted in a failing state structure in which certain groups were consistently excluded and coup d'états were frequent. To specify, the relationship between the people and state institutions has always been a tense one in Syria. This tension is caused by the challenge of politically and economically incorporating different ethnic, sectarian, economic, religious and political groups into

[214] Personal communication with many tribal sheikhs in Amman, Istanbul, Urfa, Beirut and Tal Abyad between 2012-2015. I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Carole O'Leary for sharing her helpful suggestions, insight, and detailed comments on the importance of the tribal affiliations in Syria during her visits to Ankara (2012-2013). I am aware that in Syrian studies there are two trends of thought for understanding the societal composition in Syria. One group agrees that tribal affiliation still existed during the Assad periods and another group refutes this view. The point of reference for the first argument has been the claim that Hafez Assad killed off such affiliations and has annulled their influence over the Ba'ath party. It is possible to confirm that under Hafez Assad tribal affiliations were nonfunctional and insignificant. Actually, the tribal sentiments and affiliations were never extinct in the Syrian polity. Rather it was a dormant phenomenon. However, especially during the Bashar period, the influence of the Ba'ath party increased and tribal identity has actively resurfaced as one of the sub-national identity categories.

the system. This tension has always been salient in Syrian politics.[215] The decades-old alienation and 'divide-co-opt-rule' policies have only served to deepen these segregations in terms of economic and social rights in Syrian society. [216] The divided structure of Syrian society has worked to the benefit of the regime (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

The use of violence and pressure within their broad intelligence network, particularly during the Ba'athist period, prevented the development of a collective Syrian consciousness and stifled the emergence of genuine participatory attitudes. Thus, in Syria, where the process of building a nation-state has not been completed, loyalties were generally established with the regime based on a patron-client understanding and the personalities, especially the personality of Hafez al-Assad during his reign (Wedeen, 1999). Depending on their tribe, religion, sect, economic status and allegiance to the regime itself, different sections of the society, in varying degrees, have been exposed to the Ba'ath regime's authoritarian, top-down, naturalizing, exclusive and discriminating policies since the mid-1960's. In parallel to particularities commonly witnessed in many Middle East autocracies, there has also historically been a general state of injustice and inequality in Syria. Given that the Kurds were stripped of their right to Syrian citizenship (Ababsa, 2009: 33), it may seem that they are the most deprived group in Syria. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that many other groups have been deprived of their social, political and cultural rights to different extents. The access to the above mentioned rights by those claimants of rights has generally been conditioned by their loyalty to the regime constructed upon a minority identity and its leader.

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[215] For Hudson (1977: ix-x), the legitimacy problem is the result of "a complex set of historical, social and cultural conditions, aggravated by imperialism and modernization, which have made it difficult for Arab political systems to achieve consensus on matters of identity".

[216] These 'divide and co-opt' policies of the regime have exacerbated ethnic and sectarian divisions and have enhanced social and economic inequalities. Such policies have also been shaped by the French colonial legacy (1920-1946). During WWI, the French have afforded a level autonomy towards the religious and sectarian minorities in Syria against the Sunni Arabs to be able to limit their influence over the state. Named *La politique minoritaire*, the policy circumscribed the popularity of Arab nationalism throughout the course of WWI. France provided autonomous regions for the Druze and the Alawites and also granted autonomy to *Sancak* (aka Alexandria). Through such allocation of autonomous regions and privileges to certain minorities, France laid the foundations for a Syria where the Alawite community, of which Assad is also a member, holds power. See Pipes (1990: 29); Rabil (2006: 9); Maoz (1999: 2).

These injustices have left deep scars on society. One example of how deep these scars run was the slogans chanted by thousands during the early phases of the Syrian revolts in 2011. When asked, many people were protesting to fight for their dignity and against inequality, exclusionary policies and social injustice.[217]

5.2 Al-Assads' State and Bureaucracy

In spite of the fact that the coup d'état carried out by Ba'ath Party in 1963 was considered a revolution by those who did it, it was seen by the people as one of the coups among a series of others that had been staged in the country by that time (Hinnebusch, 2008: 266). The new regime which emerged as a result of the coup d'état was established by a small number of military officers not by a grassroots movement (Van Dam, 2011: 15-33). The new regime was not able to establish a wide support base and encountered opposition from politically active segments of society like the Nasserists, Islamists and liberals within a short period of time (Hnnebusch, 2012: 96). Due to the size of the opposition, it was not expected that the new regime would be long-lasting. Yet, the fact that Syria has been ruled by the same regime since 1963 has revealed that the last coup was, in fact, not an ordinary one (Hinnebusch, 2008: 266).

Despite acceding power by means of a coup in a country with a complex political and social structure, the Ba'ath party has managed to remain in power and obtain popular support, despite previous expectations that they would fail. It has broken the influence held by economic oligarchs with its top-down revolution (Hinnebusch, 2002), obtained the support of peasants with its land reforms and has created, with nationalization, a public sector in which middle and working class individuals are able to participate (Hinnebusch, 2012: 96). The Ba'ath regime has succeeded in obtaining the critical support of large numbers of the rural population, in most part through the (Ba'ath) party.[218] Parallel to obtaining the economic support of various

[217] For further details see the chapter VIII.

[218] The Ba'ath Party, established by Syrian Christian Michel Aflaq and Syrian Sunni Salah al-Din al-Bitar, adopted secularism. Thanks to this secular approach, it has gained followers belonging to different religions from several Arab countries, particularly Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. For further details about the Ba'ath Pary and its ideology, see: Rabil (2006: 17-33);, Choueiri (2000: 197-207); Atay (2000: 131-154); Seale (1988: 148-163); Hopwood (1988: 85-95); Abu-Jaber (1970). For the relations between Egyptian leader Abdel Nasser and his rivals in the Arab World after the dissolution of the United Arab Republic in 1961, see: Kerr (1971).

parts of the population, the regime worked to legitimize itself through its adoption of a militant Arab nationalism. Hafez al-Assad ruled the country until his death when his son Bashar al-Assad took the rule. In this sense, it fits more to call this 45 year-old ruling in the country as the era of al-Assads rather than a Ba'ath era.

Upon a full analysis of the ruling periods of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, it is easy to see that in the midst of their efforts to maintain the power of the minority, a series of policies were implemented in order to control the people, construct a sustainable power and prevent the formation of a 'substantive' opposition, which would be necessary for any kind of revolution/coup/social movement to occur that might overthrow the al-Assad regime. Co-optation policies, divide and rule strategies, using law as a tool of repression, creating an effective security apparatus, controlling the economy by means of their crony capitalists, implementing Arabization policies and exploiting foreign policy are among the main strategies implemented during the regimes of the two al-Assads, of course with some nuances. At this point, it is worth noting that the regime has divided any possible opposition or implemented strategies to reduce their efficiency. Interview data suggests that the regime's relationship with tribes, and its attitude and treatment of the Ulama, can serve as a model to build ties to reinforce 'legitimacy'. The regime's economic and strategic alliances with certain notable families reveal the heart of the matter. In M Barmu's words, the Ba'ath regime was successful in establishing a holy triple alliance that consolidated its rule. This triple alliance was based on three pillars: politics, trade and religion. These pillars were solidified in the form of good relations with religious sheikhs in Damascus and Aleppo (personal communication, January 5, 2013). Significant support and privileges were rendered to these groups in order to buy their friendship and make them allies of the regime. Additionally, the regime entered into partnerships with businessmen from Damascus and Aleppo.

The changes in the regime's policies within this consolidation of power process have influenced the social base of the regime's support. Support from various sections of society and the elite class to the regime varied depending on these policies. The changes brought about by the two al-Assads became one of the most significant factors in determining the strength of the relationships surrounding the members of the administration or and their social contract with the Syrian people. In this context,

policies adopted by the two al-Assads, who established a minority rule in Syria, led to considerable shifts in social base and 'legitimacy'. This is a point that will be elaborated more in upcoming pages. To summarize briefly, while the era of Hafez al-Assad featured strategic alliances with various fractions of the society, the era of Bashar al-Assad turned out to be a period in which privileges were mostly reserved for the Makhluf and similar families (Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 31).

5.2.1 Absolute Power of Hafiz Al-Assad through the Ba'ath Party

Hafez al-Assad's gradual ascent within the Ba'ath party was an important corner stone for Syrian politics (Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 1-15).[219] The real and the long lasting change came when Hafiz al-Assad took power in 1971. Despite the fact that there has been an extensive period of political turmoil, including violent outbursts of popular discontent (for example Hama 1982; Kamishli 2004), the fundamentals of the Syrian political order have not, with few exceptions, changed dramatically since the early 1970s (I. Beyanuni, personal communication, January 21, 2013). Thus, the seizure of the Ba'ath Party by two Alawite officers, al-Assad and Salah Cedid in 1966, by means of an inner-party coup was a critical juncture for Syrian politics. Subsequent to this inner coup, the founder of the party, Misheal Eflaq (Sahner, 2014: 101-104)[220], was forced to leave the country and afterwards the cadres of the party were populated with Nusayres[221], Durzis and Ismalies, initiating

[219] By taking almost all of the votes in the elections after the military coup, Hafiz al-Assad became the first Nusayri head of the state in Syria in March 1971. Assad's sense of politics and personality, who remained in power until 2000, have deeply influenced Syria for 30 years. For the details of the period under Hafiz al-Assad, see: Othman (2014); Leverett (2005: 22-57); Maoz (1991); Hinnebusch (1990); van Dam (1979, 2011); Hinnebusch (1991).

[220] There is a Christian minority of 10% in the country. Syrian Christians do not seem to be unhappy with the present regime. Christians are allowed to practice their faith so freely that special days such as Christmas and Easter are officially celebrated across the country. In this structure, the only fear of Christians is the foundation of an Islamic regime in Syria. Since they lived on these lands prior to Muslims, Christians consider themselves to be true residents of Syria, and are present in every aspect of social life. Politicians such as Mikhael Ilyan and Tevfik Damascusiyya, military officials such as Chief of Air Staff Wadih al-Muqabari, academics like Constantin Zureiq and George Tomeh, administrators such as Hanna Malik, and authors such as Colette Khoury and Hanna Mina made their presence felt in the social and political arenas throughout history. Christians have also taken office in the Ba'ath Party, founded by Michel Aflaq, another Christian. For instance, Gubran Kourieh, the spokesman of former President Hafez al-Assad, was also a Christian.

[221] As for Nusayris, they are considered an aberrant and radical sect of Islam, and are insulted by Sunnis in the government and among the people for having adopted a faith which does not comply with Islamic codes. Nusayris have lived isolated, in the mountains with very few Christians or Muslims from other sects around. They did not work the soil, but lived on plundering neighboring villages and robbing tourists. Consequently, Nusayris became infamous. In the beginning of French rule (1920-1946), Syrian Nusayris changed their name to Alawite. According to some researchers, this name was given to Nusayris by the French who wanted to win them over. In *The Islamic Struggle in*

the erosion of the regime's secular character (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014; Khatib, 2011: 15-34). Hafez al-Assad facilitated the Israeli invasion during the Six-Day War as a means to weaken the hand of Salah Cedid, achieving his wish in 1971 and seizing power completely.[222]

After Hafez al-Assad took power, Syria entered a 'stable' period. In Hinnebusch's words, "he transferred an unstable regime to a robust one" (2012: 96). One of al-Assad's most significant successes was his success in bringing stability, though in a form of authoritarianism, to a country that had been floundering as a result of military coups, rendering it unable to act as a state (Leverett, 2005: 23).[223] According to Hinnebusch (1990: 45), the principle reason behind al-Assad's success was his replacement of the collective leadership system with a system shaped according to his needs, which he called a "presidential monarchy" (Also Lobmeyer, 1997: 93). In Barmu's words, even though the regime established by Hafez al-Assad was representing the Ba'ath Party on the surface, the regime was actually a complex privilege and sectarian structure based on intelligence gathering (personal communication, January 5, 2013). Beyond this, if investigated carefully, we would also find that this regime was not based on the state and its associated institutions, but on a clientelist artificial family regime which belonged to one family and rested upon inter-personal interest based relations (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). In Ghailoun's words "the leading aspects of the clientelist structure of the regime's social base are the interest groups in the military and the security forces. Interest groups are the official partners of the civil groups that power-elites identify with as well as businessmen" (personal communication, November 23, 2014). This resulted in a situation where the regime could easily enforce and subjugate the masses without having to consult any representatives of the people or law, as it possessed its own weapons, money, power and influence. The state institutions fell under the monopoly of power-holders. The state's fundamental frame of reference was to carry out the work of this ruling strata (George, 2003: 64-

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Syria, Umar (1983) indicates that Nusayris wanted to be called Alawites, which means followers of Ali, in order to overcome the prejudice that they were not loyal to Islam.

[222] In return for giving then a part of the land, al-Assad assumed the title of "Conqueror of Quneitra". For the details (internal dynamics in the Ba'ath party and the role of Assad) between 1963 to 1971 see Othman (2014: 35-57).

[223] Between 1949 and 1970, there were 20 coups or attempted coups in Syria. This nearly corresponds to a coup per year.

81). In this same sense, many strong regional and international ties were utilized to this end. The pursuit of private as opposed to public interests compounded with exaggerated clientelism and opportunism has meant that the country has been governed, for half a century, through martial law and states of exception. This form of governance grew to such an extent that it became engrained in the culture (B. Ghalioun, personal communication, November 23, 2014). For many people, there exists no or little meaning or sense of the term national interest. The Ba'ath regime has used foreign enmities as a pretense for hiding the privileges that are granted private, group and class interests over national ones.

As for domestic politics, Hafez al-Assad put two major policies into practice: He reinforced his own power (Aras & Toktaş, 2008: 33-34) and established a restrictive and oppressive system in order to avoid Syria's return to instability. For the purpose of securing his power, al-Assad assigned politicians and military officers from the Nusayri community to important positions, a religious sect to which he belonged (Van Dam, 1979; Gubser, 1979: 17-48; Khuri, 1991: 49-62).[224] As indicated by interview data, the main criteria for such assignments were, apart from the prerequisite of belonging to the Nusayri community, the loyalty and commitment level of the assigned to al-Assad himself. In short, al-Assad personalized his power (Leverett, 2008: 28; Barut, 2010: 295). According to Lobmeyer (1997: 94), it was not the ideology, but rather a "patronage of authority" which held the political elite together. In the words of Van Dam, who served for a long time in the region as a diplomat, al-Assad's obsessive sensitivity to loyalty played a major role in his preference for continuity in the state's administration as well as his desire to keep the same people close to him. Accordinlgy, when the 1990's arrived, many army members in their sixties who, under normal circumstances would have retired by then, retained their jobs as a result of their boundless loyalty (1979; 2011: 145-159).

As it is seen, loyalty and communitarianism were prominent motives in the distribution of roles and rights within the Syrian state. As part of his never ending search for legitimacy in a mostly Sunni society, al-Assad assigned many Sunni

[224] Van Dam (2011) examines how the minorities move up in the Ba'ath Party and the army in Syria, the policies and power struggle among the Alawite community through first hand references and in an academic manner.

politicians to senior positions in the cabinet, army and his party in order to ensure his image as a leader who addresses the entire public (Donker, 2010: 438). Accordingly, Sunni Muslims were elected as prime ministers, ministers of defense and foreign ministers during al-Assad's reign. For instance, as of 2006, Sunnis were in control of 10 out of 14 positions under the Regional Command of the Ba'ath Party, whereas the Alawite minority in Syria usually holds the key positions in the army and security forces.[225] Interview data suggests that these people from different sects and ethnic groups who were assigned to high positions did not have enough power to execute major decisions. In theory, the Ba'ath party was in power and the state's key positions were continuously distributed to those with Alawi-Nusayri origins. As many politicians agree and as stated above, Sunnis, Christians and Druze were sometimes appointed to some senior positions, but "above them, there was always either a deputy, lieutenant or office manager that was Alawite and acted as the ultimate decision-maker, and an incumbent for consultancy and guidance" (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

In the era of Hafez al-Assad, the legislature, executive and judiciary powers were entirely used and managed by the Ba'ath Party (Barut, 2010: 277-320). Every domain of administration was kept under the control of Ba'ath Party, whose superiority was confirmed by the Constitution.[226] The motto of the party was 'Unity, Liberty and Socialism' for long years (Salem, 1994: 61). It employed a conventional socialist approach, defending the nationalization of industrial production means and the redistribution of agricultural lands. As of August 1990, the Ba'ath Party pushed socialism into the background, and stressed the necessity of Arab unity and gradual economic reforms in the Syrian economy (Barut, 2010: 283).

Thanks to appropriate regulations, al-Assad became the Head of State, Leader of the Ba'ath Party, and leader of the National Progressive Front (*al-Jabha al-Wataniyyah at-Taqaddumiyyah*, NPF), formed with other parties in the parliament. In doing so,

[225] It should be noted that the role of the Ba'ath Party in the era of Hafiz al-Assad was not the same as it is in the era of Bashar al-Assad.
[226] As Article 8 of Syrian Constitution indicates, the Ba'ath Party is the ruling party of the administration. Although the new constitution (2012) nullified it, the power of the president remained unchanged.

he obtained total control of the political arena (Aras & Toktaş, 2008: 34).[227] There are no laws on the regulation of political parties in Syria and under the leadership of the Ba'ath Party, the so-called NPF (Geoerge, 2003: 87) coalition was established.[228]

A new constitution in 1973 was structured around the NPF alliance that was established on March 7th, 1972 (Picard, 1978: 132; Othman, 2014: 103-104). Although such a step indicated a democratic opening, decades later, as Perthes (2001: 252-253) states, "… the powers of the president remain, constitutionally and as a matter of fact that, almost absolute… According to the constitution, the president can rule by decree and without parliamentary participation, and if circumstances so demand, he can veto parliamentary laws and dissolve parliament" which means that all the laws "that had been passed by parliament have been introduced by the executive". The President had the right to appoint the Vice President, the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. This shows how the electoral and the governmental procedures were dominated by the Ba'ath party, in such a way that change, reform or any calls for liberalization never occurred without the oversight of the Ba'ath regime.[229] This is also important for the election of the President. First, the Ba'ath Party proposes a candidate, which the parliament must nominate to the people. Since the pro-Ba'ath parties hold the majority, their candidate is most likely to be nominated. This single nominee is then subjected to public referendum. He does not run against any other candidate. Here it is important to point out that Article 62 of the Constitution delegates the Supreme Constitutional Court the responsibility of dealing with any disputes over the electoral process (WIPO, n.d.). The fact that a delegation chosen by the President is to preside over the electoral process of either

[227] The parties of the front must accept the leadership of the Ba'ath party to be the only legitimate holder of political power, something which is determined by Article 8 of the Constitution.
[228] Parties of the National Progressive Front can be listed as follows: Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, Arab Socialist Movement, Arab Socialist Union, Khalid Bakdash led Syrian Communist Party, Yusuf Faisal led the Syrian Communist Party, Social Democratic Unionists, Socialist Unionist, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, Democratic Socialist Unionist Party, Arab Democratic Unionist Party, National Pledge Movement.
[229] Although the people elect the president and the legislative branch in Syria, which might seem democratic on the surface, there are certain realities that ensure the survival of the Ba'ath regime. Out of the 250 members of the parliament, the *Majlis al-Sha'ab*, 167 of them are guaranteed for the NPF. The political front, which is composed of pro-Ba'ath parties (the only ones allowed to form) have the majority (66%) to pass any law it wishes. Since no parties other than the NPF are allowed to run, the remaining 83 seats were granted to independent candidates in 1980.

the President himself or a candidate from his party, shows how much the system is controlled in order to yield the results desired by the ruling regime.

The NPF subsequently became the only legal ground for legitimate political activity in Syria. While there were parties operating outside this framework, they were defined as illegal organizations by the state.[230] To be brief, since the Ba'ath Party came to power in 1963, other political currents in Syria did not follow a normal course (George, 2003: 95). When the government forbade the existence of parties besides the NPF in June 2004, other parties lost their official existence, Kurdish parties being the most affected by this process (Wieland, 2006: 41).

The parliament, namely the People's Council, has never had an *independent authority.* Even though members of parliament have the right to criticize current politics and change the bills, the executive body continues to maintain total control over the legislature (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). So much so that in 2001, Ma'mun Humsy and Riad Seif, two independent, reform-minded MPs were deprived of legislative immunity and accused of 'attempting illegal modification in the Constitution' when they asked for constitutional amendments ("The Ba'ath Party," 2010).

Another policy implemented by al-Assad prevented pursuing ethnic politics and the protection of ethnic identities, by means of conferring 'Syrian Arab' identity on every citizen through restriction and oppression (F. Amro, personal communication, November 6, 2013). For a few years, al-Assad maintained the 'Arab Belt' project that had been initiated by previous Ba'ath governments (Ababsa, 2009: 42-48). An example of the manifestation of this policy occurred in the mid-1970s when 70,000 Arab families were settled in 40 'model villages' established along the Turkish border (Nazdar, 1980: 217). Additionally, the Kurdish city names were given Arabic substitutes (Human Rights Watch, 1991: 97). This Arabization policy was not implemented only on Kurdish society. Turkmens have also been subjected to this process (Kirişçioğlu, 1995: 140; Uyar, 2004: 599). This has resulted in a significant

[230] This could be clarified with the following indications made in Article 26 of the Constitution: "Each citizen possesses the right to join in political, economic, social and cultural life. The right of participation is regulated by laws" (WIPO, n.d.).

amount of assimilation, particularly among the Kurdish and Turkmen populations (M. Şandır personal communication, September 29, 2010).[231] Taking this into account, we can say that the al-Assad regime effectively implemented an Arabisation policy (Yıldız, 2004: 17; Lowe, 2006: 164).[232] The constitution of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party in this sense states:

> The Arab Nation constitutes a cultural unity. Any differences existing among its sons are accidential and unimportant. They will disappear with the awakening of the Arab consciousness. …The national bond will be the only bond existing in the Arab state. It ensures harmony among the citizens by melting them in the crucible of a single nation, and combats all other forms of factional solidarity such as religious, sectarian, tribal, racial and regional factionalism (cited in van Dam, 1979: 15).

5.2.1.1 Military in a Regime as a "Party-Army Symbiosis"

The ever-increasing power of the president was directly connected to the loyalty of the army to the regime and the effectiveness of the extensive internal security services. The leadership of both bodies was taken over by Alawites. Even today the principle branches of the security services still act separately and independently from the judicial system (US Department of State, 2014) and the "corrupt behavior on the part of police and intelligence personnel is tolerated by the regime" (Kassem, 2004: 8). As Rabinovich (1972: 212) points out, the most important factor behind the sustainability of the Ba'ath regime has been the "army-party symbiosis". In this mutual relationship, the army ensures its existence by ensuring the safety of the regime, while the party ensures the necessary framework for the relevant ideology, core cadres, loyal bureaucrats and institutional political activities. Thus it can be argued that "the military behaves not as the guardian of the still nascent state, but as the instrument of the strong and determined regime" (Anderson, 2011a: 31). For that reason they are likely to be quite brutal in suppressing opposition.

[231] Also see A. Öztürkmen (personal communication, 2011); F. Amro (personal communication November 6, 2013).

[232] The major stimulator of the emergence of the Kurdish cultural and political movement is that the Arab nationalism became dominant in the 1950s. This exclusivist doctrine did not include non-Arab minorities, most of them Kurds.

As previously noted, al-Assad assigned politicians and military (security) officers from the Alawite community (trusted Alawite kinsmen), of which he is a member, to key positions. Interview data suggests that there are two levels of leadership in the Syrian army. The higher level is one unattainable by non-Alawite members of society, though sometimes accessible if they accept non-command positions in research, health, etc (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). As Ali al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) notes, there are some officers from Sunnis, Christians and other religious groups in the army, but they are just there to keep up appearances. Moreover, the "military's expansion kept professional officers happy with promotions and equipment" and their domestic role became incorporated in society to the degree that "in many villages, the military was a preferred prestigious career … and local officers viewed as brokers with the state bureaucracy" (Hinnebusch, 2001: 86). Consequentially, with their favor, the regime was protected by the military forces for more than thirty years and "mainly three major anti-regime uprisings were suppressed. (1973-1980-1982)" (Hinnebusch, 2001: 85; also see Brownlee, 2002).

Having come into power by means of a military coup in 1963, the Ba'ath Party destroyed all opposition in a short time via violence and oppression. As for Barmu (personal communication, January 5, 2013), since the al-Assad family took power, they, those close to them and their party began to eliminate opposition figures and excluded people with alternative views. The regime began to attribute all important roles to al-Assad be it commander, father, president, adviser or a person for whom one sacrifices oneself. It was only this person that could possibly know what was best for Syrian citizens. If any person said something different than what his or her leader said, then that person became an infidel. It was considered justifiable to murder this person and this person was declared a traitor of the country. It reached such a point that:

> You could only be a friend of the regime or an enemy of the country not the regime itself. They were declaring you an enemy and a person who betrayed his or her country. If you opposed the regime, there happened to be persons even from your family who opposed you in order to ingratiate themselves with the regime and they were accusing you of carrying desires to harm the country. They were not saying that this person was not objecting to the

> country and homeland but to the regime. For that reason, there did not exist an embracing social environment (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013).

For instance, in 1951 the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was represented in the parliament by almost 20% (Lefevre, 2013: 27-29).[233] This rapid progress, however, turned them into a target (Rizq, 1980).[234] Acknowledging that the 74% Sunni majority as a threat against his reign, al-Assad had the MB massacred, erasing (Van Dam, 1979: 105-117) them from the political arena (Lefevre, 2013: 154).[235] This massacre, carried out in 1982, is known as the 'Hama Massacre'. Interview data suggests that this elimination of the opposition enabled the Ba'ath party, namely the al-Assad family, to substantially suppress the influence of ethnic and religious pressure on the regime (Y. Ghadban, personal communication, January 8, 2013). During 1980's, after the opposition in Hama and other regions was brutally suppressed, people were afraid to criticize the regime (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). When looking for an explanation as to why Syrian civil society and opposition were historically unable to grow, it is important to include the Hama massacre in our analysis.[236] It was frequently discussed in the interviews made in my fieldwork and it was one of the most important events that prepared the ground for people to participate albeit hesitantly in the 'Arab Spring'.

5.2.1.1.1 Hama massacre

Al-Assad was able to use the army in order to suppress regime opposition. The most striking example of this took place in 1982, when the MB rioted in Hama.[237] In 1982, the Syrian regime was aware that the MB was a threat to its survival. Knowing that Hama was one of their strongholds, the regime entered the city to search for

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[233] For an outstanding study on Islamism in Syria see Khatib (2011).
[234] For a MB approach to the Ba'ath and Hafez al-Assad, this book provides great insight. As is known, the Muslim Brotherhood Organization founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt, is a political and religious formation that has sections in many Arab and Islamic countries. The Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was established in the city of Hama by Dr. Mustafa al-Sibai in order to build an Islamic state against the French between the years 1945-46 (Lefevre, 2013: 23-26).
[235] Several Islamic groups under the leadership of the MB were in an ongoing armed struggle against the regime particularly between 1979 and 1982 (Umar, 1983).
[236] Almost every single interviewee stressed this particular event.
[237] In the book's eighth section titled "Sectarian Showdown: Eradication of the Muslim Brotherhood", Van Dam discusses the policies of the regime towards the MB in detail. See van Dam (2011: 105-117); for an account from the regime's side see Othman (2014: 197-202).

members of the outlawed organization. There they were ambushed by the MB. They quickly took control of the city. The regime's initial response was to deploy 12,000 soldiers to Hama. The clashes between government forces and the MB lasted for approximately two weeks. As a means of quickly ending the uprising and of suppressing the consciousness of rebellion, the Syrian regime responded with a disproportionate amount of violence. Furthermore, the regime's use of "heavy artillery tanks and helicopter gunships" (Brownlee, 2002: 50) in the town of Hama, was not exclusive to MB targets. Many residential areas were destroyed during the regime's siege of the city. Although the MB was fighting back in an organized way (Lefevre: 2013: 122), its failure was guaranteed by the regime's disproportionate use of power. By the end of the second week there were 274,000 soldiers in Hama.

To be brief, the events which began on February 2nd, 1982, lasted 21 days, where upon 40,000 persons were killed as a result of the violent intervention by security forces (A. Abu-Salama, personal communication, May 6, 2013).[238] Almost 20,000 others were taken into custody, never to be heard from again. Interview data suggests that in the wake of the massacre, 800,000 people were forced to leave the country.[239] The fierceness of the regime's reaction was grounded on the murder of Alawite army officers and sheikhs by MB members and above all, on the assassination attempt on President Hafez al-Assad (Van Dam, 2011: 174).[240]

The army, constituted mostly of Nusayris, especially in its higher ranks, played a critical role in putting down the 1982 uprising in Hama.[241] It is important to note that alongside the army, the Damascus and rural social constituency remained loyal to the regime despite these events. The uprisings in Hama and Homs presented an important test for al-Assad. The regime's ability to secure the loyalty of different

[238]For further details about what happened in Hama see: Maoz (1991:252-3); During the 21 day Hama massacre, 38 mosques, 2 churches and 52 pharmacies were destroyed and all the shops in the city were looted. Human Rights organizations have also prepared dozens of detailed studies on this issue. See: Human Rights Watch (2010); Human Rigths Watch (2009); Mazlumder (2010). This massacre was committed by 12,000 soldiers under Rifaat al-Assad in order to annihilate the MB in the northern cities, particularly Hama.
[239] Several personal communication with Syrians along the Turkish border throughout 2012-2014.
[240]The Muslim Brotherhood started to fight against the regime in 1970s in order to get rid of the government controlled by Nusayris who were considered unreligious by the Muslim Brotherhood.
[241] For the confessions about sectarianism in the army units of Hama, see Van Dam (2011: 166-170).

groups and squash the uprisings militarily indicated that they had passed a potential turning point.

Al-Assad also made effective use of the intelligence services and prevented the formation of anti-regime organizations in Syria (Cleveland, 2000: 388-389; Lobmeyer, 1997: 101; Aras & Toktaş, 2008: 35-36).[242] In this sense, the secret service became an important weapon for the regime in hindering the progress of civil society (Lobmeyer, 1997: 101). Even after the events in Hama "multiple intelligence agencies and praetorian guard units proliferated to protect the regime" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 97; Also see Lefevre, 2013: 147-153). Even though there were differences within the regime, it is fair to say that it was successful in developing a solid and close-knit systematic structure. Regardless of what they were, the mistakes of those working within the regime were never questioned or disclosed. For this reason, whenever one attempted to oppose the regime, there was always someone ready to interrogate the suspect with the goal of ingratiating themselves to the regime before the regime could act. As a result, we never saw the development of a social aura or space to accommodate the opposition. As illustrated by al-Bash's words, "the paw of security was harsh" (personal communication, February 21, 2013).

The Syrian intelligence service has continually been one of the major forces in the Syrian social and political arenas. They are so powerful that any lieutenant or sergeant from the *mukhabarat* (intelligence) can act with more impunity than a secretariat of a branch of the party or the party's main office members (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).The *mukhabarat* has three main offices; a) Syrian Military Intelligence, b) Syrian Arab Air Force Intelligence and c) the General Intelligence Directorate.[243] The Military Intelligence Service is headquartered in the Ministry of Defense. The Air Force Intelligence is mostly made up of Alawites, and is one of the strongest intelligence units. The General Intelligence Directorate is the civilian intelligence service, which was led by a Sunni, Hisham Bakhtiar, prior to the uprisings. The job descriptions, jurisdictions and

[242] As in many other countries in the Middle East, *Mukhabarat* it is also quite effective in Syria.
[243] There is no clear information on this subject, but this is what I have summarized from the interviews.

sphere of activity of these intelligence agencies are not specified (Rathmell, 1997; Gambill, 2002).

The existence of the *mukhabarat* has played a crucial role in the de-politicization of society (Green, 2011). As stories of midnight arrests, torture and blackmail circulate throughout society, the lack of accountability and a place to direct blame, the enemy of the Syrian people becomes increasingly vague.[244] The fact that the *mukhabarat* wear no uniforms, have no visible hierarchy, no known headquarters, and no definite name means that the common Syrian does not know who to fear.[245] There is an established "culture of secrecy" (Sahner, 2014: 119-122). At this point, I will reference my interview with al-Bash in which he offered interesting insight:

> When someone talked with a person next to him or her, the person used to say "walls hear what we say". Nobody dared to talk. Even in the houses, wifes and husbands could not discuss political affairs. The situation was so dangerous that a father could not even confide in his children. As you see, we were subjected to such a treatment. This was the situation in Syria (personal communication, February 21, 2013).

Thus, everyone fears everyone. This is the feeling that I observed from my interviewees, that the regime succeeded in its goals of instilling fear among the population by creating a *mukhabarat*-state. The lack of a visible threat made every ordinary encounter dangerous for the common Syrian. Therefore, the *mukhabarat* strategy targets not only the freedom of public expression, but the freedom of private expression (Members of the Syrian Free Judges and Prosecutors, personal communication, October 24, 2013). A Syrian's private conversations and private thoughts become an excuse for his imprisonment or his death. This fear usually leads to self-censorship. At the end of the day, this situation resulted in a suspicious and self-serving society whose members thought only of themselves and lacked feelings of unity. Here matters a daily abasement that stems from the pressure of security forces. We can see an example of this from Barmu's statement:

> Whenever the Syrian society attempted to rise up, it was humiliated. It was done so that when one went to pay the telephone bills and taxes, when one got

[244] My personal observation.
[245] It can be observed that there is a fear among the general population.

> on a bus, one was despised. Even one could not get into the minibus without being mauled. Be it for a loaf of bread or electricity, in any case the society was stonewalled by the security and intelligence (personal communication, January 5, 2013).

The laws themselves limit freedom of expression and the construction of civil society. Freedom of expression is seen as one of the most important threats to a regime's survival. Therefore, the Ba'ath regime worked to monopolize public discourse as soon as it came to power (Wedeen, 1999; Also see Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 164) and it has succeeded in doing so in many ways. For instance, the martial law of 1963 and the restrictions it brought to public life have been detrimental to social and cultural freedoms (Members of the Syrian Free Judges and Prosecutors, personal communication, October 24, 2013). It cancelled the press law of 35/1946, thus banning the licensing of any newspapers and magazines, and confiscated all printing equipment.

As Stacher (2007) points out, the army and security bureaucracy are deeply politicized and non-institutionalized structures in Syria. Thus, their opinion on Bashar's succession to power was important. In this regard, what A. al-Bash, someone experienced with Syrian politics, says is remarkable. He argues that "this regime was basically established upon personal relationships. When Hafez al-Assad came to power, he created a basis that would ensure the continuity of the regime and he removed all obstacles before Bashar al-Assad in order to allow his rule to pass from him to his son" (personal communication, February 21, 2013). Here it is necessary to say that starting from the second half of the 1990's, Hafez al-Assad eliminated those who might potentially oppose Bashar's succession to his father and those who might be alternatives to Bashar (UMP, 2013). In fact, there was considerable preparation put into Hafez al-Assad's plan.[246] Since it was known that some had objections to Bashar's imminent presidency, those people were sidelined from the political arena. In S. al-Taqi's words Hafez al-Assad begun a specific campaign to undermine the old guard by getting rid of Ahmad Shahabi, Ali Ayda, Ali Duba and like-minded people, embarking on a new path in the new regime by

[246] When Hafez al-Assad died, Bashar al-Assad did not face any problems (an appeal against him).

transmitting power from the army to the security services (personal communication, April 24, 2013). In addition, special units within the army started to grow active and began to work with Bashar. These units were mostly under the control of the family and largely consisted of loyal Nusayris. At this point, it is necessary to discuss the Fourth Brigade. Members of the Fourth Brigade, commanded by Mahir al-Assad, form the backbone of the army and are known by some as the 'Tigers of the Fourth Brigade'. The brigade is equipped with the most modern arms, has the best headquarters and bunkers around Damascus and is often likened to the Defense Units set up by Rifaat al-Assad in the 1980's. It is even thought that the Brigade is made up of the remains of this unit. Members of this group are afforded special treatment inside the military as well as their families.

Shabbiha

Apart from these official army and intelligence units, Syria also has a Shabbiha: an unofficial armed unit whose members are not party of the armed forces but who also serve the al-Assad regime (particularly Bashar's regime). It is said that the Shabiha is headed by Bashar al-Assad's cousins, Fawaz al-Assad and Munzer al-Assad (FSA Members, personal communication, January 31, 2013). The numbers of the Shabiha militia are estimated to be somewhere around 5 to 10 thousand. The organization is primarily made up of armed civilian Alawites and it is said that the organization has a history going back to 1975 when the Syrian Army entered Lebanon. The organization smuggled alcohol, tobacco, drugs, cars and guns between Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Cyprus.

5.2.1.3 Role and Place of Judiciary in Syrian Politics

The judiciary also exists as a tool of the regime for enforcing their control. The close relationship between the ruling party and the judiciary is rooted in the state's formation process. In the postcolonial period, Syria emerged under 'juridical statehood'. It was given the right to self-determination by law, but had not yet earned this right from its people nor did it have the capacity to govern those people (Members of the Syrian Free Judges and Prosecutors, personal communication, October 24, 2013). It began its journey towards statehood with negative sovereignty rather than positive (Leenders, 2010: 7). As a result, the judiciary became the government's tool for power consolidation and the judiciary began to represent the regime and its interests. The regime's control of the judicial system is evident in the

Syrian Constitution itself. For instance, when articles 131, 139, and 145 (WIPO, n.d.)[247] are read in conjunction, it is clear the power the President had over the laws' approval. It shows the lack of a 'checks and balances' system. Both al-Assad regimes made use of ordinary and extra-judicial procedures to keep the Syrian people in check. Martial law, which was in force in Syria between 1963 and 2011, was clear evidence of this. This led the regime to perceive state sovereignty and individual human rights as mutually exclusive. As a result, the Syrian judiciary became a tool for repression rather than justice. In this regard, it does not seem possible to talk about judiciary's institutional autonomy even on a small scale.

Altogether, it is not surprising that when the regime perceives internal dissent as receiving foreign support, it resorts to extra-judicial practices. The dissidents are portrayed as criminals, and are therefore subjected to violence. Using the courts to oppress the opposition and to make an example of dissidents costs the regime less money and legitimacy. It hides the authoritarian character of the action, as compared to overtly violent tactics. In this way, "Syria's judiciary appears to have played a role in the upgrading of authoritarianism" (Leenders, 2010: 11).

5.2.1.4 Syrian Economy under the Thralldom of Clientelism

In the mid-1960s, the Ba'ath Party implemented land reform and nationalization projects based on socialist ideology, which destroyed the rich with large amounts of land and the private industrial sector (Hinnebusch 2001; Saleeby, 2012). As a result, the peasants and the workers became dependent on the state. Although these changes were accompanied with social policies of welfare provision and land redistribution, an important financially independent sector had been eliminated. The Ba'ath Party was successful in destroying the different classes that had previously existed and constituting itself as a party that could act outside the class system. This subsequently decreased the possibility of anti-regime mobilization at the class level (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, February 2, 2015).

[247] Article 131: "The Judicial authority is independent. The President of the republic guarantees this independence with the assistance of the Supreme Judicial Council." Article 139: "The Supreme Constitutional Court is composed of five members, of whom one will be President, and all of whom are appointed by the President by decree". Article 145: "Should the Supreme Constitutional Court decide that a law or decree is contrary to the Constitution, whatever is contrary… is considered null and void with retroactive effect and has no consequence."

At this point, the only space left for anti-regime mobilization was at the individual level. The emergence of independent technocrats, bureaucrats and bourgeoisie provides an important route for the transition to democracy. Since this group was the first to become financially independent from the regime, they have the potential to organize the opposition. According to Hinnebusch (1993: 246), "an independent bourgeoisie is the force most able to carve out room for civil society and potentially to check state power". The Syrian state had previously managed to prevent this by guiding the emergence of both the middle class and the bourgeoisie.

The middle class consisted of bureaucrats, middle-class merchants, and educated circles and was co-opted by the regime. The regime did this by first using its own institutions to mold the emerging middle classes. For example, its military "incorporates one-fifth of the labor force" (Hinnebusch, 1993: 252). This one fifth of the labor force could potentially be the wage earners that form independent thoughts, ideologies, desires and push for changes in the regime. However, since they were employed by the government itself and were brought up with government ideology, the possibility of them acting against the regime remained low.[248] The same goes for those who worked in the government's non-institutionalized institutions.

Secondly, the regime co-opted the middle-class merchants and the bourgeoisie that was to emerge through the privatization of state entities. Since in Syria the state and the Ba'ath Party existed in parallel to each other, the government itself became a tool of the ruling party (Barut, 2010: 293). Interview data suggests that the social system that the ruling party embodied gave it immense control over economic activity in the country. Therefore, the liberalization processes that were meant to create financially independent sectors also ended up serving the regime. Nazih Ayyubi (1995: 422-423) draws special attention to this: "the guarded economic liberalization of the 1970s involved an extension and broadening of the patronage net of the regime from a few cliques and families to a larger proportion of the population". This explains clearly the controlled liberalization of the economy under Hafez al-Assad and why,

[248] Personal communication with several businessmen from Aleppo and Idlib, October 2013, Reyhanlı (Turkey) and January 2013, Amman (Jordan).

for example, shop licenses, government contracts, and project permits were given to those who were regime supporters.[249] There emerged a wide clientelist network.

The emergence of larger private companies also occurred under the control of the Syrian regime. This ended in the creation of the concept of "*awlad al sultah*" or children of authority (Ismail, 2009: 17). The growing transport and tourism sector of the 1970s occurred in cooperation with the government and emerging entrepreneurs. The companies that were willing to support the regime were chosen for government contracts. This process of clientelism and co-optation was rigorously implemented well into the 1980s and 1990s (Hinnebusch, 2012). The new oligarchy formed during the past 20 years all had close connections with the regime. The high-level executives and officials of the government allowed their sons to prosper in the private sector.[250] An example of two families who profited from these connections are the al-Jud and the Tlass families who dominated the food imports sector and are seen as synonymous with the regime (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

This domination of the private sector by pro-regime figures meant that those who hold the financial power in Syria also have stakes in the survival of the regime. Any process that threatens the regime also threatens their income (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). Therefore, no credible opposition has emerged from the private sector.

5.2.1.5 Foreign Policy of Syria and Its Impact on State Policy

When evaluated within a general framework, al-Assads' Syria positioned itself in the anti-Western camp (Hinnebush, 1991: 384). Be it against the West or against Israel, their general stance towards the West has always been negative, at least in terms of discourse. Even if their relations with the West have softened from time to time,

[249] Personal communication with several businessmen from Aleppo and Idlib, October 2013, Reyhanlı (Turkey) and January 2013, Amman (Jordan).

[250] Mustafa Tlass, who was the Minister of Defense for many years, has used his connections to gain advantages in the private sector. His family owns the MAS economic group, real estate agencies, major restaurant chains and companies. Bilal al-Turkmani who is the son of the current minister of defense Hasan al-Turkmani, owns the only private weekly magazine. The family of Bahjat Suleiman who was the head of internal security until 2005, owns major advertisement and publishing companies. Rami Makhlouf, a cousin of Bashar al-Assad has a monopoly over the cell phone sector.

unlike Egypt, Syria is clearly part of the anti-Western bloc. We can come to this conclusion when we look at the Syrian governments' basic discourse, the steps they have taken historically, and the history of their relationship with the West. For instance, we know that since Hafez al-Assad came to power just after the war with Israel, a very strong ally of the Western world, taking back Golan Heights remained al-Assad's main foreign policy objective (Hinnebusch, 2002, 1991). He empowered the army by increasing the expenditures in order to reach this goal (Maoz, 1991: 99-100).[251]

Under the Ba'ath regime, Syrian foreign policy was viewed as a tool that could be deployed to increase legitimacy and improve Syria's foreign relations. Syria's foreign policy is part of nearly every aspect of the country's political agenda. Moreover, in the name of preserving its legitimacy, the regime has not refrained from hosting radical groups to fight against Israel. Hamas is the most obvious example of this.

Syria was involved in the 1967 Arab Israeli War as well as the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1989 which was another proxy conflict between the major powers of the region (Hinnebusch, 1991: 379-382, 396-404; Othman, 2014: 76). Syria has continuously been an ardent enemy of Israel, offering support Hizbullah in their battle against Israel ("Assad Syria", 2008; Leverett, 2003, 2005: 12; Wieland, 2006: 119-125). This anti-Israeli rhetoric in Syria's foreign policy discourse has melded with anti-western, anti-imperialist statements (Hinnebusch, 1991: 374). Due to Syria's state formation process, there has been heavy stress on anti-imperialist discourse that underlines the sovereignty of the state. Non-interference in domestic affairs is among the principle mottos employed in every foreign policy statement made by Syrian leaders. This has given a significant advantage to the regime since the main Syrian opposition, namely the political Islamists, share the same approach to a large extent (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

The threat of Israel has justified the continuation of the regime's use of martial law, which was implemented in 1963. The perception that there is a constant threat of war

[251] This case shows how deeply the Israeli factor affects the countries of the region.

has allowed the Ba'th regime to tighten its grip on society with the supposed aim of keeping internal stability. As it is also indicated in the interviews, U.S Department of State (2014) also states that the "Syrian governments have justified their use of martial law by portraying Syria as being in a constant state of war with Israel and by continuing to share threats posed by terrorist groups." The increase in military trials and the strict implementation of martial law during the late 1970s and early 1980s can be seen as a response to the war waged with Lebanon. The foreign crisis was an excuse for extra judicial activity (Leenders, 2010: 11).

Moreover, the geographical proximity of the Arab-Israeli conflict has allowed the regime to justify its high expenditures on the military. According to an estimate made by the C.I.A., in 2005 Syria spent 5.9 percent of its GDP on the military (CIA, n.d.). As is clear from recent events, having a well-equipped military does not only serve the regime's interests abroad, but also at home.

5.2.1.6 Costs, Challenges and Side effects of the Ba'ath policies under Hafiz al-Assad

It is widely acknowledged that Hafez al-Assad established his relationship with the society through bureaucratic and corporate institutions, such as the Ba'ath party, that succeed in overcoming the urban-rural and sectarian divides. This effectively provided the regime with the support of a wide coalition, including the middle class and the peasantry (Saleeby, 2012; Zisser 1998). While it was totalitarian, it was somehow still a functioning system. As B. Kodmani (personal communication, November 13, 2014) argues, Hafez al-Assad was able to "contain, absorb and pre-empt social discontent" by implementing a deliberate strategy. In the regime's grooming of society, the struggle against Israel emerged as a sine qua non, a necessary element for boosting the regime's national legitimacy (Sahner, 2014: 130). Interview data shows that deciding policies based on anti-Israeli sentiment has become the ultimate trademark of the Ba'ath regime.

Although a seemingly stable regime emerged, they were, of course, not free of their own problems. One of these problems was the resentment of the Nusayri political elite by the "urban merchant clerical complex" (represented by the MB) as a result of their domination of the administration" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 97; also see Khatib,

2011: 51-81; Levefre, 2013: 43-62). With the Alawite political elite's rise to power, the previously established (30s, 40s, 50s) secular dimension of the regime was eroded and replaced with majority that identified themselves by religion (Van Dam, 2011: 34-47; Khatib, 2011: 13-34). The polarization of religious affiliations was muted and a little bit diluted by the interests of certain Sunni groups that supported the regime (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014). However, several uprisings occurred between the mid-1970s and lasted into the mid-1980s.

The populist policies that were pursued by the regime brought about several economic problems. In this sense, the 1980s and 90s were mostly spent addressing Syria's economic vulnerability. The public sector had become accustomed to providing "populist benefits such as jobs, subsidized food, and patronage for the regime's constituency" making it incapable of operating "as an engine of capital accumulation" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 97). Private capital had been ostracized from the system and as a result, many private sector companies had fled the country or would not invest in Syria's economy. Moreover, the hostile attitude toward Israel meant that Syrian resources were being appropriated for military spending as opposed to economic development. This also meant that Syria's relationship with the West was weak and there was little foreign investment happening. This situation generated a permanent fiscal deficit that could only be sustained by the collection of external rents (Hinnebusch, 2001b). In this regard, Hafez al-Assad acted in a very shrewd manner by using Syria's hostility towards Israel as a reason to sustain its military expenditures, obtaining support from Arab countries and the USSR (Hinnebusch, 2012: 97).

Beginning with the end of the 1980s, and throughout the 1990s, al-Assad has had to deal with several problems that originated from the weak economy by beginning to liberalize and regulate the economy. Hinnebusch (2012: 98) summarizes the necessity of these policies:

> Regime survival required that he preserve the fiscal base of the state and hence reform the economy; but economic reform required consolidating the power of the reformers within the regime and adapting Syria's nationalist foreign policy and its populist social contract to the requisites of capitalism without destabilizing the regime.

In this sense, al-Assad was able to carry out this economic transformation in a balanced manner without leading to excess. In summary, the fundamental concepts of the Hafez al-Assad era were: high loyalty to the President, Arab nationalism, and violence-based politics used against various sections of society, under the guidance of judicial regulations. The rule of Bashar al-Assad did not witness a substantial change in these main dynamics with respect to government' mentality. Rather, a modification of governmental composition and the social base, in other words 'destroying the entrenched balances of the Ba'ath regime' occurred (S. al-Taqi, personal communication April 24, 2013), creating difficulties for Bashar al-Assad (Hinnebusch, 2012).

5.2.2 Destroying the Entrenched Balances of the Ba'ath Regime in 2000s

The next part (chapter VIII in Part II) of this study will offer a detailed analysis of the process that began as a result of the protests unfolded in 2011, the following four years, and the strategies that have been employed by all sides. However, before looking at 2011 and beyond, it is necessary to look at the developments that occurred between 2000 and 2011 to provide the context (Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 16-34). In terms of historical trajectory, the question that ought to be analyzed is whether or not Bashar al-Assad upset the balances in the Syrian regime that his father had successfully managed for 30 years. If he caused any change, what type of change this was and what consequences did it have for elite alliances and the Syrian people. One of the largest questions lies in the social response to Bashar al-Assad's changing cooptation policies. In fact, in the last 10 years prior to the uprisings (2011), both the economy and the inter-elite alliances underwent important changes and transformations. The question lies in whether this transformation created the opportunity for the 2011 uprising. Have the changes in socio-economic policies within the last 10 years presented new opportunities to the Syrian people in terms of self-expression and mobilization? The main purpose of this section is to briefly summarize this socio-politial transformation within Syria in an organized manner.

This part of the chapter will look at the principle strategy employed by Bashar al-Assad during his first 10 years in power, what occurred as he applied certain policies and their consequences. Perhaps the most critical, I will try to answer how these 10

years changed the political balance in the country. Finally, in consideration of the decisive role played by al-Assad's foreign policy approach, its role in the Syrian uprisings will be assessed.

5.2.2.1 Bashar al-Assad: A reform minded leader?

In Pinto's words, "Bashar al-Assad tried to gain political legitimacy by presenting himself as a leader committed to political reform and economic modernization of Syria" (2013: 212).When Bashar al-Assad, who had made an impression as a 'reform-minded' leader even prior to the death of his father, was elected president after his father is death in 2000, there was a great optimism concerning the future of Syria. H. Hashemete (personal communication, April 24, 2013), from the leaders of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, provides important insight in this regard:

> The situation in Syria, of course as far as the people are concerned, has been deteriorating and they think that they have been hijacked for the past… almost half the century especially since Hafez al-Assad came to power in 1970. On the other hand, in 2001, people had some hopes, including Muslim Brotherhood, this new man, this doctor, well-educated man might be a friend and may do something to change something…

As the chairman of the state-controlled Syrian Computer Society, Bashar al-Assad was the one who introduced internet to the country and the general purpose of doing so was to make an impression as a new leader who would usher the country into the age of technology and internet.[252] There was a common hope, that a young leader who had received his education in the West would be able to bring Syria into 21st century standards (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).[253] His intentions to fulfill these expectations were clear in his inaugural speech where he used words such as 'openness' and 'transparency', which suggested that he would adopt a decisive stance ("Kelimah Al Sayyed", 2000; also see Karabat, 2005; Perthes, 2004: 13; Zisser, 2000: 118). However, after ten years it was clear that Syria had not received the leader they had hoped for.

[252] Indeed, serious evolutions took place for the internet during this period. The number of computers in the country was 15,000 in 1998 and increased to 330,000 by the year 2002. This has increased the use of the Internet (Aras & Toktaş, 2008: 37-43).

[253] There was an everlasting hope for Bashar al-Assad even up until his first speech in parliament after the uprisings began in 2011.

When he came to power in 2000, Bashar al-Assad had to consolidate his power amongst both the administration and the Syrian people. This required a careful balancing of his policies. He had to appeal to the Syrian people but also make sure not to threaten the vested interests of the ruling 'oligarchy'. Therefore, his primary tactic was to 'liberalize'. His first speech emphasized economic and political liberalization, ending corruption and the possibility of good relations with the West and Israel if they were deemed necessary for internal reforms ("Kelimah Al Sayyed", 2000). In line with his speech, the scholarly literature and the interview data demonstrate that he took steps to boost his credibility by bringing reformist technocrats into the government, initiating certain reforms for a transition to a market economy, creating campaigns against corruption, and closing the Mazzah prison where most of the Islamists were held, bringing the number of political prisoners down from 4000 to between 300 and 1000 (Pace & Landis, 2009: 120-121).

His initial rhetoric of 'creative thinking', 'constructive criticism', 'reform' and 'modernization' (Pace & Landis, 2009: 120) encouraged many Syrians to actively criticize the regime and to demand certain rights. For instance, more than one thousand people signed the 'Statement of One Thousand' (George, 2003: 182-188). The statement demanded fundamental political reform. When Riad Seif attempted to combine it with the 'Movement for Social Peace', it attracted the attention of the people and the regime (Pace & Landis, 2009: 120).

During his first year in power, Bashar explicitly displayed a reform-minded attitude and conducted a working style under a relatively open-minded policy. The period, called the 'Damascus Spring', brought along an era of visible political freedom, especially in Damascus.[254] Interview data confirms that at the time, intellectuals were able to easily meet in houses, cafes and other public spaces for discussions on various issues and able to establish discussion forums while meeting little to no oppression because of such activities (Hanano, 2011). Moreover, many political prisoners were released. For instance, in September 2000, 99 intellectuals published a statement on the necessity of new reforms (Leverett, 2005: 203-206), and in

[254] The term "Damascus Spring", defines this period in which the winds of reform and democracy were blowing, and was inspired by the Prague Spring of the 1960s.

November, 600 political prisoners were set free (Whitaker, 2000). However, this era of liberty only lasted a short time. By mid-2002, such meetings were forbidden and soon the participants were imprisoned (Ghadry, 2005; also see Aras & Toktaş, 2008: 42-44).[255] This was important in that the amount of space for people to express their political views was already greatly limited. The Legislative Decree 50/2001 in September 2001 carefully lists the subjects that are forbidden to be discussed in the media, and boldly censors all publications (al-Bunni, 2008)[256] coming from abroad.[257] An example of one victim of such strict laws was al-Domari newspaper which was initially forced to decrease its distribution from 40,000 to 14,000. It was closed down in 2003 after continuous harassment by the regime ("Attacks on the press," 2004).

We should also discuss the short-lived existence of civil society in the 'Damascus Spring' which mobilized the demand to end emergency law, form a multi-party system and hold competitive elections (George, 2003). This short period of relative freedoms ended when the regime felt threatened with the activities of the civil society movement. The then Syrian Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam stated that the regime would not tolerate any acts threatening to bring about a civil war (Pace & Landis, 2009: 121). By the end of this suppression, eight leading figures of the Syrian civil society had been imprisoned. All but two civil society forums had been closed down. The two civic associations that remained after the 'Damascus Spring' were the Committee for the Revival of Civil Society and the Jamal al-Atasi Forum for Democratic Dialogue (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). Yet, they did not work in conjunction, providing different opinions to the public and had no potential to produce concrete results. Therefore, they were perfect

[255] In this sense, a study focusing on the failures of al-Assad as a reformist, see: George (2003). Also, another study that discusses the dilemma of Bashar al-Assad see Rabil (2006: 187-197).
[256] The Syrian Arab Institution for the Distribution of Printing Materials is the only institution that can distribute printed materials. This institution's links to the regime can be seen from the fact that representatives of the Minister of Information and of the Ministry of Culture are members of its board.
[257] Article 29, clause 9 of the Press law gives the Prime Minister the right to accept or reject applications for print media permits. It must be noted that TV and radio stations aren't even allowed to ask for permits. This press law states that for disobeying the media laws, the maximum jail time is three years and maximum fine around 21,500 dollars. Article 29, clause 5 bans publications that "infringe on national security and society's unity."
Article 44 states that non-political publications can't publish on political topics.
Article 22 states that any publication receiving money from abroad in exchange for propaganda must be closed down. (This law is important since it can be used to close down a newspaper by blaming it for damaging national security, without any credible proof.) See Al-Bunni (2008).

for the al-Assad regime to demonstrate their commitment to upholding free speech in Syria (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

Such a 'return' to anti-reform approach can be attributed to several causes. When Bashar al-Assad came to power, he signaled a pro-reform approach. Evidently the people expected such and the so-called 'Damascus Spring' occurred. During this 'Spring', top-down changes continued but not as drastically as in the previous period as there was no room for active participation. Bashar al-Assad might have feared that a rapid and uncontrolled change could destroy Syria's stability and displace his minority government (Perthes, 2004: 19). In spite of his support for reform, he probably concluded that such a reform should occur slowly and under his control. This meant that the new administration was in fact aware of the need for reform, but stepped back so as not to risk its power (Perthes, 2004).

A second reason might have been the continuing influence on the government of the former bureaucratic, military and political elite, namely the old guard from the era of Hafez al-Assad (Perthes, 2004: 8; Rabil, 2006: 187). This core team might have slowed or prevented attempts at reform by Bashar in fear of losing their control and influence (Leverett, 2005: 19; Abdul-Hamid, 2004). In this sense, we can claim that Syria then was still a self-enclosed country. Notable efforts were made by Bashar al-Assad for foreign expansion. Nevertheless, it was impossible to attain such an extensive change in mentality merely through the vision of a leader ("Syria-The Regime", 2004).

The supporters of the status quo in Syria, in a sense, the 'state within a state', wanted the government to apply old school methods (Wieland, 2006: 43) mostly grounded on action by the military and police. This group also defended Syrian military presence in Lebanon and the Arabization of the entire Syrian people. They were strong in terms of the positions their supporters held in the intelligence services, army and other security units. They had the power and capability to use any means necessary to serve their purposes, including assassinations and provocation.

On the other hand, some Syrian intellectuals argued that 'Damascus Spring' was an intentional political maneuver and that its true aim was to detect and then neutralize

the country's dissidents (Ghadry, 2005; Leverett, 2005: 20).[258] However, considering that *Mukhabarat*, the Syrian intelligence agency, was already aware of and closely followed all dissidents, al-Assad did not seem to need to play such a game.

Interview data suggests that although Bashar al-Assad seemed to be a reform-minded leader, due to the institutional shortcomings and the fact that the president was restricted by a small group within the regime, reforms were unable to succeed. In al-Bash's words, "he was originally serious in his intent as an individual, but those who surrounded him prevented him. He was making decisions, but they were not being implemented" (personal communication, February 21, 2013). Reform efforts were put on hold in fear of threatening the regime and the old oppressive system replaced these reforms with plans of their own. Each person working with the President was striving to ensure their own interests and thus the regime was unable to exist in harmony with the Syrian people. This existed as long as the laws applied to some and not to all (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). To be brief, the personal interests of the old guard were largely similar and were almost completely in line with those of the regime, and Bashar al-Assad had no choice but act in the same way. Most of his successes during this time were merely cosmetic successes, nothing more than 'dirigible reforms'. In fact, al-Assad used emerging opposing groups (those who were secular and liberal loyals) in order to strengthen his own power against the old guard. However, when other groups began to surface, the hardliners grew much stronger. In this way, Bashar became more dependent "on the organized base of the regime apparatus" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 103).

Whether al-Assad was really sincere in his words or not should be the subject of another study. I would like to continue my arguments here by only drawing on concrete happenings.

[258] Those who support this view do not consider Bashar al-Assad to be very different from his father, but one who grew up in the same system and who would take no steps contrary to the interests of his family.

5.2.2.2 Trying to Upgrade the Authoritarianism and Its Social and Political Costs

As indicated previously, when Hafez al-Assad died in 2000, Bashar al-Assad had already been expecting to be president for the last 5-6 years. The fact that the ruling elite and state institutions, who are ordinarily quite politicized, had approved this transfer of power in the way that Hafez al-Assad wished was a result of the possibility of a power struggle in the absence of a clear heir, in which the elite would have no guarantee of their status (Hinnebusch, 2012: 98; Stacher, 2011: 199, 205; Robinson, 1998). That no power struggle occurred was in itself a revolution (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013) since this occurred within a hereditary republican regime. This was itself a very significant matter showing the coherence among the ruling elite. At that time, Bashar was 34 years old and the Syrian constitution did not allow those under 40 to be elected as president ("Bashar al-Assad: Syria's", 2011; President Bashar Assad, 2000). Upon this, the constitution was amended in a way that the law was made compatible with his age. Additionally, he was directly promoted to the rank of field marshal. In time, he took over the army, its armed forces, the Ba'ath Party and the presidency. In Khalaf's words "he was an unpromising youth who gained power by accident" (2012).

Bashar al-Assad's main wish, in terms of the policies he followed, was to modernize the authoritarianism under the Ba'ath regime and entrench the position of the ruling elite. The continuation of the system that Bashar's father had set up and his approval within this system was of critical importance for his personal fortune. A similar method was employed in other countries in the region for the survival of similar regimes and has been described in the literature as a transition from populist authoritarianism to a post-populist (neoliberal) authoritarianism. In Heydemann's terms, "authoritarian power was used to pursue economic liberalization and privatization in the process of shifting public assets to crony capitalists' "network of privilege" (Cited in Hinnebusch, 2012: 95). In the literature, authoritarian upgrading is described as a tapping of resources, diversifying of the social base (constituencies) and the reconfiguration of state-society relations. However, despite making several gains in the short term to sustain the regime, in the long-run, such reconfigurations may also have high costs. The events experienced in the 'Arab Spring' countries are an example of these costs, including the developments in Syria. In Hinnebusch's

words “Bashar al-Assad inherited an authoritarian state with built in vulnerabilities which he set about upgrading; he went relatively far towards restructuring the regime’s social base but failed to undertake a corresponding political adaptation” (2012: 95).

Al-Assad viewed the older generation as an obstacle to his own power concentration and as a consequence aimed to remove the barons around him. The process of the leadership turnover, which began from the first day Bashar took office, was to a large extent completed by the time the 10th Syrian Party Congress occurred in 2005 (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013; S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013; also see Hinnebusch 2011). S. Al-Taqi (personal communication, April 24, 2013) argues that the period between 2000-2005 was a period in which Bashar was fighting to gain a grip on power. However, the turnover process, which in amounted to a process of alienation and ostracization, also damaged the clientelist network (elite alliance) set up by Hafez al-Assad.

In time, the Ba’ath ideology and the functions of the party were to a large extent abandoned and the formation of reformist factions caused a disruption in the relations between social segments living in rural areas that had long been a part of the clientelist system and the regime, and a shift in the social base.[259] Conflicts were no longer able to be mediated by local authorities, which meant that the state’s political infrastructure was no longer functioning.[260] These entities were no longer acting for the sake of the state or the nation. The traditional tools for mediation and crisis management had disintegrated (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). In other words, Bashar al-Assad had lost the tools to manage society. In Hinnebusch’s words, “seeking to consolidate power within the regime he inherited, al-Assad unwittingly weakened his capacity to maintain control over society” (2012: 99). Therefore, where citizens would once have gone to local party or union officials for redress or access, increasingly they started to approach tribal, sectarian or

[259] Personal communication with many tribal sheikhs in Amman, Istanbul, Urfa and Tal Abyad.
[260] Personal communication with many tribal sheikhs in Amman, Istanbul, Urfa and Tal Abyad. The society was becoming more nervous with each passing day. For instance, there was a major incident in Sueydi. Small clashes between Bedouins and Druze led to the intervention of the central aviation unit of intelligence services and they killed 21 Druze in a very violent manner. Also in Qamishli the clashes that emerged after a football match were controlled by the intervention of the presidential guard.

religious notables (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013; S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

In short, the inner balance Hafez al-Assad had established through his relationships with those loyal to him and with people living in the rural areas, had begun to erode. In this sense, Hinnebusch (2012: 99) argues that "in uprooting these barons, al-Assad reduced the obstacles to his reforms but in doing so, weakened powerful interests with clientelist networks that incorporated key segments of the society into the regime". In addition to this, he turned over all the money to his nephew Rami Makhluf who had opened tax free shops all over Syria. In other words, "he became more dependent on the Asad-Makhlouf family clan, with a resulting overconcentration of patronage, opportunities and corruption in its hands at the expense of other regime clients" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 99). Interview data and the literature suggest that the "narrowing of loyalties from the party to the family core was a dangerous move" for the Bashar al-Assad regime (Khalaf, 2012). In Pinto's words together with Bashar al-Assad "the centralization of networks of corruption and patronage within the circle of the president's allies, so that enormous amounts of resources were channeled into their hands" (2013: 222). In the same vein to Hinnebusch (2012: 102), "the corrupt aspects of the statist system survived and indeed, economic liberalization removed former limits on corruption, but its welfare dimension contracted".

In other words, al-Assad sought to eliminate the elites with which he was not satisfied and instead installed inexperienced technocrats who did not have sufficient authority to lead and shied away from accepting responsibility. This significantly damaged his relations with existing clientelists. According to Hinnebusch (2012: 102), "there was actually a deterioration in the quality of the administration as experienced officials were dismissed". This gave rise to a 'conflict of interest' that was not immediately visible to the outside world and should certainly not be overlooked.

With Bashar al-Assad, the number of groups obtaining economic rent from the regime decreased.[261] Under Hafez al-Assad, the tribes and individuals that supported the regime were able to benefit from the "chocolate fountain" [external rent in al-Taqi's terms] either from subsidies or the central authority's conscious indifference towards corruption (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). The Hafez regime was charged with distributing economic rent within the system. This was a system of corruption that succeeded in regenerating loyalty through the mechanism of negotiation and co-optation (Perthes, 1995: 181-187). However this drastically changed with Bashar who reduced subsidies and "inflicted hardship across a wide swath of society" and these hardships hit all parts of society, including "farmers using irrigation pumps to taxi drivers" to those who suddenly found themselves unable to pay for oil to heat their homes (Hinnebusch, 2012: 102). While large numbers of people could have benefitted from the advantages and resources provided by the regime, under Bashar's policies these resources were reallocated to Bashar's family and close friends (M Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). These economic policies allocated funds not towards developing the economy, but to the business partners that were already well developed. For instance, Syrian officials indicated that the al-Assad family and their partners enjoyed around 85% of oil income in 2005 (Ghadry, 2005). The regime actually "jettisoned its former popular constituency" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 102; also see Saleeby, 2012). Traditional economic relations were disrupted and political subsidies gave rise to a minority that became increasingly richer (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2013; Lesch, 2012: 7). As this minority became richer, it strengthened its monopoly over the economy. These people became completely disassociated from traditional and social reality, spending their time in luxurious shopping malls in the city centers, resulting in the alienation of the remaining levels of society.[262] In Kodmani's words:

[261] When the uprisings took off, Syria was a developing country with medium-level income, mainly grounded on agriculture, petroleum, industry and tourism. The petroleum and agriculture sector, which comprises 50% of the GDP, were the fundamental pillars of economy. Equal to 25% of GDP, agriculture also employs 26% of national labor. Syria has a population of 23 million, with 12.4 million younger than 25 years and the population growth rate at about 2.3%. Each year, around 250,000 youngsters participate in the labor market. However, since the economy cannot attain sufficient growth rates, and due to a lack of satisfactory employment areas, the unemployment hovers at 20%. According to the statistics by the UNDP in 2005, 30% of the Syrian population was declared poor, whereas 11.4% lives below subsistence level.

[262] This particular point was raised by many Syrians in Turkey, mainly those who emigrated from the rural areas of Idlib and Aleppo. See Güçer et al (2013).

> He [Bashar] made small concessions to workers but he particularly neglected rural areas and peasantry; and that has I think played a key role in bringing about the uprising because the resources of the country were concentrated at the hands of a small minority based in Damascus and Aleppo mainly; the rest of the population was more and more alienated, particularly the rural areas (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

5.2.2.3 Manipulable Government Policies

Favoritism is very common in the Syrian economic system, and individuals with sufficient financial power can even manipulate government policies.[263] One of the most explicit examples of this occurred in 2000, with respect to the competition between two GSM operators, Syriatel and 94.[264] The government employed the two companies to provide GSM service to its citizens. 25% of Syriatel belonged to Egyptian Orascom Company, whereas Rami Makhlouf, the cousin of President al-Assad, owned the remaining 75% (Borshchevskaya, 2010: 46). On the other hand, the owners of 94 were the Mekati, the Lebanese Minister of Communication and Rami Makhlouf. In January 2002, Rami Makhlouf claimed he did not receive his due share of the profit of Syriatel (Borshchevskaya, 2010: 46). Following this, Syrian officials began to harass Egyptian government to the extent that both the Egyptian CEO and the Egyptian Marketing Manager were threatened by the Syrian Intelligence Agency. Moreover, the Lebanese lawyer of Orascom was no longer allowed to enter Syria. Finally, in April 2002, Syrian officials told the Egyptian CEO that he had to leave the country within three days, therefore giving Makhlouf the right to monopolize the GSM operator (Borshchevskaya, 2010: 46).

As the abovementioned incident reveals, confiscation of public property in Syria is carried out not only by the government, but also by private sector branches in relation with the state. Such people can abuse political relations for the sake of obtaining money. In this way, Rami Makhlouf was able to direct public authority for his personal interests. Consequently, he was able to take over the remaining share of Orascom, making a joke of property rights in Syria.

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[263] Personal communication with several Syrian businessmen in Reyhanlı, Turkey and Amman, Jordan.
[264] Syria is one of the countries providing the public with the latest mobile phone services.

This kind of selective application of property rights brings high social costs with it. Such activities deal a big blow to private sector economic development, since it means letting potential foreign and Syrian investors slip. Not only was Rami Makhlouf the President of Real Estate Bank which is run by government (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013), but his uncle was also the director of the Presidency Guards who had no purpose but to maintain the regime and carried significant political influence. Makhlouf almost established his own commercial empire, and was the owner of duty-free chain stores throughout the country which were exempt from customs and taxes.[265] All of his activities were grounded on political regulations, epitomizing how personal interests influenced Syrian governmental agencies.

However, there were some exceptions in this case. Firas Tlass[266] is an example of the complex relations within the Syrian regime. He is the son of General Mustafa Tlass, the Minister of Defense for many years, who was also a key in helping Hafez al-Assad seize power in 1970.[267] His brother Manaf Tlass was an officer in the Syrian army who defected from the army after the uprisings embarked in 2012 (Charara, 2012). The family has many members working in the government and the army and owns one of the largest companies in Syria: *Min Ajl Suriyya* (MAS) (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 14, 2012). Surprisingly, this family is not Alawite. The fact that a Sunni family could attain such popularity among the Alawitie regime shows the extent of clientalism in the regime. These non-Alawite associates of the regime are called "*al-alawiyya al-siyasiyya*" (Haddad, 2009: 29-55), or 'political alawites'. This shows that it is personal interests rather than religious loyalty that drives the al-Assad regime (Haddad, 2012). Despite these ties, Firas Tlass has spoken out against state corruption in the media, in order to gain some prominence amongst the people and fight the traditional representations of his family. It is important to acknowledge, however, that his speeches were merely symbolic and that they did not threaten the survival of the regime.[268]

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[265] Personal communication with Syrian businessmen.
[266] Firas Tlass is the founder and owner of the prominent *Min Ajl Suriyya* [MAS] company. His company is involved in a variety of fields, including agriculture and manufacturing.
[267] For the memories of Mustafa Tlass see Van Dam (2011: 146-149).
[268] http://www.firastlass.com/int.php Personal communication with many Syrians.

The regime did not fail to set an example for these powerful private entrepreneurs of what would happen to them if they truly posed a threat to the regime. Riad Seif was one such example. A successful businessman before his entry into politics, Seif pushed for economic reform while serving as a Member of Parliament. However, when his calls for reform threatened the regime, his business was also targeted by the Ministry of Finance (Schenker, 2008). In short, businessmen brave enough to criticize the regime and its partners did not go unpunished in Syria. The punishment usually took place in the form of transferring their income to politically obedient and manageable businessmen. Consequently, it is obvious how property rights in Syria were ignored and ease with which the government could deprive businessmen of their rights in the case that they crossed the prescribed political lines.

These numerous examples show how the relationship between private entrepreneurs and the state went beyond an 'alliance', as termed by Ayyubi (1995). Powerful private entrepreneurs ended up being merely an extension of the regime in the private economic sphere. Moreover, as Hinnebusch puts it; "such crony capitalists… have little interest in leading a democratic coalition" (2006: 252).

Due to the lack of a clear distinction between the private and public sectors, Syrian government officials could be directed pursuant to individual interests outside the public sector, such as what happened with Syriatel. This system, which was passed down from father to son, set the scene not for economic development but for governmental favoritism.

The main factors preventing the progress of Syrian economy can be listed as follows: the large but unproductive state sector, decreasing oil production, the increasing deficit in non-oil sectors, countrywide poverty, weak and ineffective finance and capital markets, as well as increasing unemployment as the result of a fast growing population (Schmidt, 2007). Having already occupied every sector, fraud now rules even the judicial system. Bureaucratic processes are generally conducted through under the counter deals. Moreover, that the state can finance its activities regardless of the social structure and socio-economic activities decreases the ability of the state to relate to society. As a result, the state overlooks requirements for economic

development and social welfare and does not attach them due importance (Schmidt, 2007).

5.2.2.4 September 11 Attacks and Changing Dynamics in the Region

The primary aim of Bashar al-Assad's foreign policy was to integrate Syria into the global system. Such a transition was necessary in order to overcome some of the problems that had been passed down from Hafez al-Assad. To summarize, while Hafez al-Assad's foreign policy offered national legitimacy on the one hand, on the other it required the regime to continue to obtain economic rent. This posed difficulties for Bashar al-Assad who struggled to integrate Syria into the world system while dealing with Syria's nationalist Arab identity. This was an indication that Syria was still stuck in conflict with Israel and, by affiliation, the West (Hinnebusch, 2012). However, in the current state of affairs one can see that this struggle required a delicate balancing act which was clearly not achieved. This was largely the result of the important changes that took place within the region since 2001. Whether the attempt to integrate into the world system was genuine is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is true that the regional developments led Syria to close itself off, instigated calls for reform with regards to domestic policy, ameliorated its relations with Iran, and gave the regime the opportunity to build its legitimacy in a traditional manner. Increasingly during this period, foreign policy was used for generating nationalist legitimacy and tightening the inner ranks of the regime. In Bashar al-Assad's words:

> After 11th of September, which is one year after I became president, and then at the beginning of 2002 you have the invasion of Afghanistan, then later the invasion of Iraq, then the whole chaos that has been created and extremism because of this wrong policy, my first priority became the stability even before food. So, you change the priorities according to the circumstances. So, security becomes first; how can you stabilize your country, how can you prevent your society from extremists, how can you fight terrorism because you have sleeping cells everywhere in this region. Second, economy, this is the second urgent priority ("Interview with Syrian President", 2011).

Apart from domestic events, the incident that influenced Syria and the entire world the most was the September 11 attacks (Telhami, 2003). In the wake of these

traumatic events, the United States began to threaten all allegedly 'antidemocratic' regimes in the greater Middle East that included the area from Morocco to Afghanistan. Following the overthrow of the Taliban regime by Afghan coalition forces in April 2002, it was Iraq's turn and 24-year reign of Saddam Hussein ended in March 2003. In the wake of these events, the US Government began to threaten and accuse Syria and Iran, working to gain international support and intensify pressure on these two countries (Leverett, 2003). In this way the USA and its relations with Israel and Iran may have affected reforms (Pace & Landis, 2009).

In 2002, when the USA was preparing to attack Iraq, Israeli diplomats claimed that the true targets should have been Syria and Iran (Gordon, 2003; Rabil, 2006). Moreover, they argued that Syria was the country that needed the most urgent intervention, even before Iraq. After the War, Israel did not give up this practice of "hinting" to the USA of intervention in Syria and Iran (Laçiner, 2006). USA foreshadowed a possible attack on Syria as early as 2004, and offered evidence that the assassination of Hariri could possible serve as the basis for a possible US onslaught in Syria. When President Bush declared Syria and Iran as two of the three countries in the Axis of Evil, this was considered a notable step on the path towards intervention (Gordon, 2003).

The opposition inside Syria has tried to make use of many opportunities to make their voices heard and pressure the regime into adopting reforms. Al-Assad allowed the 'Damascus Spring' to strengthen his position compared to other oligarchs inside Syria as well as establish good relations with the West. This limited mobilization was the first of similar attempts made by the opposition. For the opposition, however, this ended as a failed opportunity. In this sense many developments in foreign policy were utilized by the opposition as opportunities. However, the regime succeeded in achieving the opposite by using these developments as an opportunity to silence dissident voices and stop potential mobilization. Interview data suggests that the regime portrayed those who called for reform as groups receiving orders from foreign actors.[269] The regime also relied on the idea that such developments on the international scale required national unity and that domestic political issues were of

[269] Personal communication with several opposition figures.

second order when compared to national issues (President Bashar al-Assad, 2007). This rhetoric was largely successful. For example, the regime has deflected the opposition that was encouraged by the fall of Saddam and that hoped to establish a "unity government by exploiting the legitimacy generated by its opposition to US occupation of Iraq" and especially through its forced alliances with Islamic groups (Hinnebusch, 2012: 103)

In order to intensify pressure, the USA accused Syria of not respecting the sovereignty of Lebanon, of supporting Hamas and Hezbollah, and of not interfering with the militants who leaked into Iraq via Syrian border (Marquis, 2004; The White House, 2004; Rabil, 2006: 151-153; Leverett, 2005a, 15).[270] They subsequently designated Syria a 'Rouge state',[271] leaving Syria in a bind (Tanter, 1999; Leverett, 2005b). Following the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minsiter Rafic Hariri in February 2005, this pressure grew even stronger (Daily Star, November 2, 2005; Orhan, 2005: 18). In April, Syria was forced to end its 29 year military presence in Lebanon (Rabil, 2006: 161-186). From another point of view, it is important to note that it was only after the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon that al-Assad was able to profit from the crisis and began the eradication of the old guard. It was during this period that he was able to almost completely demolish the old guard. While they attempted to sabotage him, they were not able to prevent Bashar from gradually undermining them. It is a fact that Bashar was having great difficulty ruling as they were supplied with huge amounts of economic rent coming from Lebanon and different systems of corruption (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 only served to mobilize and encourage the opposition (Damascus Declaration) and created an important opportunity for the opposition (Ibn-Rushd, 2005). However, this window of opportunity, as with many others, was missed by the public at large. The regime also succeeded in preventing

[270] Syria has, not only these accusations, also been accused of the claim that has contributed to drug trafficking and having weapons of mass destruction.
[271] *Rogue state* is a term used mostly by the U.S. for the states that threaten international peace, are unpredictable, support terrorism, and make use of it as a political tool. States like Libya, Syria, Iran, and Iraq were frequently used and are given as examples of rogue states. For the reasons why Syria described as rogue states, see: Wieland (2006: 119-138).

this mobilization from gaining any support by associating the opposition's "democracy discourse with the US Project of regional hegemony" and mobilizing "religious-tinged patriotism under the slogan 'God protects you, O Syria'" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 103; also see Pinto, 2013; Lesch 2012: 21-22) It is particularly important to note that the opposition efforts that had arisen after Rafik Hariri's assassination (2005) were weakened by 2008. According to Pace and Landis (2009: 138), "this was due to the pervasive fear of Syria's security forces that has created a generation of *apathetic* and *depoliticized* Syrians".

While these opportunities were perceived by the opposition, they were unable to capitalize upon them. For H. Hashemete (personal communication, April 24, 2013),

> Of course things developed afterwards [after Bashar came to power]… when he committed the crime of murdering Hariri and then the defection of Haddad, right before there was Damascus Spring and from that Damascus Declaration in which Muslim Brotherhood was a part of, stared and then defected Salvation Front…. MB and Haddam. Probably that was the first step towards political opposition which requested major non-cosmetic changes. At that time of course, there was also a bit hope, may be some signals from international community but there were some support, this in fact encouraged the defect.

Along with all these opportunities, using the same logic Bashar did not hesitate to exploit the success of his ally Hezbollah against Israel in 2006. Similarly, Bashar made use of Israel's attack on Gaza in 2009 to increase his legitimacy. Interview data suggests that the views of the people who opposed the regime were diverted to different issues such as the Palestine issue and front-line state rhetoric rather than the problems of the regime. In fact, even before the uprisings he had employed similar tactics.

5.2.2.5 Syrian Regime's Foreign Relations: Case of Iran

Syria has had varied alliances with other regional actors who are relatively confined and isolated from international powers. Syria's most prominent ally has been Iran, which politically, technically, and militarily supports the regime.[272] As opposed to its

[272] At least this is the perception on the ground.

attitude toward other countries, Iran has supported the regime's violence against the opposition movements in Syria. This means that without considering the support of Iran which has a strong Shite ideology dimension, it is difficult to adequately analyze and make sense of the Syrian issue.

The alliance between Syria and Iran is one of the key relationships in the political balance of the Middle East (Goodarzi, 2006; Byman, 2006; Agha & Khalidi, 1995; Hinebusch, 1997). During the Iran-Iraq War, the Syria approach towards Iran and Iraq deeply influenced the balance of the Middle East.[273] In this sense, the Iran-Syria duo has long drawn ire from the Sunni 'bloc', made up of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In such alliances, tension between them and an inclination towards mutual military investments have increased. The competition between regimes and the long borders between Syria and Iraq have made Syria even more influential for Iraq.

In the Nusayri denomination of Islam, the ruling elites' religious approach is different from that of Shi'ites in certain respects. However, such differences did not prevent Iran and Syria from establishing an alliance. Even though many consider this alliance to be cooperation based on political, military and economic interests, scholarly works and the interview data suggest that the MB in Syria perceives the situation in a different manner. According to the MB, the alliance is a part of the plan which aims for the domination of the Sunni Muslim world under an Iranian Shi'ite Empire (Talhamy, 2009: 563).[274] Among Arab countries in the region, Lebanon, Syria and, only recently, Iraq, are Iran's only allies. Hence, Iran closely follows Syria's political happenings. The Iranian Revolution was not beneficial for anyone but Syria. Moreover, Abdul Halim Khaddam, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Syria, defined the revolution as the most important event in contemporary history, and expressed Syria's support for the Iranian revolution from the beginning (Moubayed, 2006).

[273] In Hinnebusch's words "Assad's alignment with Iran against Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war can be seen as serving regime interests in weakening a powerful neighbor run by a rival wing of the Ba'ath party at the expense of common Arab interests" (2002: 156)
[274] Almost all interviews with Sunni political figures stressed this particular point.

Syria's alliance with Hamas and Hezbollah was another factor that brought Syria and Iran to a common ground (Hinnebusch, 2002: 156). Both countries are without question on the same page when it comes to Palestine and their hostility towards the USA and Israel. Nonetheless, as a result of the embargo imposed by the West on both countries, economic interests may have played a part in their relationship. According to this argument, the two isolated countries established a close relationship out of necessity. Additionally, Iran and Syria entered into military collaboration.

On May 27th, 2010, an interview by Charlie Rose with Bashar al-Assad reveals what Iran means to Syria:

> Iran is not my neighbor, but in the end, Iran is one of the biggest countries in the Middle East, and it's an important country, and it plays a role and affects different issues in the region. So, if you want to play a role and help yourself and save your interests, you should have good relations with all these influential countries. That's why this relation, I think, is very normal (Bashar Assad Interview, 2010).

Although it is a relatively short relationship based on self-interest, the ties between Iran and Syria remain positive. As Goodarzi (2006: 135) indicates:

> If immediate security concerns and material interests had been the driving forces in their foreign policies, particularly in Syria's case, the relationship would have collapsed. However, both parties had broader, long term strategic concerns derived from their national security priorities and based on their respective ideologies and world views. They saw a unique role for themselves in the region and utility in preserving the alliance to pursue an independent foreign policy to shape events in the Middle East in a desirable manner in the long term and to minimize foreign influence and penetration of the region.

The Syria-Iran relationship is often described as 'artificial', 'interest alliance', 'disquieting', 'troubled' and 'mannered' (Badran, 2009), making one wonder whether there is an alternative ally in the region for Syria, besides Iran. Given the pro-United States government in Jordan, the anti-Syrian government in Lebanon, the

Iraqi leadership under the auspices of USA, and the yet-to-be finalized political conflicts in Egypt and Israel, Syria does not seem to have many options.

Interview data suggests that Iran has infiltrated the Syrian security apparatus in three ways. First, as is noted by S. al-Taqi, there were a significant number of officers in the army who had converted to Shiism. Until Hafez al-Assad died, there had not been any correlation between Alawites and Shi'ites. Alawites in Syria are very secular.[275] They don't even have houses of worship. After Iranians began to infiltrate Syria, this conversion began to occur on a larger scale. These converts became the main tools for Iranian infiltration into the hierarchy of the Syrian army. For S. al-Taqi (personal communication, April 24, 2013), this is the most precious thing they have and this is what they want to maintain in the case the Bashar al-Assad falls.

Secondly, interview data also suggests that Iranians have succeeded in completely infiltrating the Syrian intelligence and security services. Thirdly, they have succeeded in constructing a consolatory body within the palace, which is particularly useful during crises. Some claimed during my interviews that since 2005 there have been regular meetings (every two weeks) between Nasrallah (the leader of Lebanese Hezbollah, a close ally of Iran) and Bashar al-Assad. This demonstrates the level of Iranian infiltration in the Syrian state. Interviewees also indicated the high level activity of the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, comparing it to the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin.

5.2.2.6 Silencing the Religious Opposition: Co-Opting the Imams

The role of religion, in this case Islam deserves attention as a potential reference for mobilization. The most deep-rooted and serious opposition against the regime, and the reality of which the regime was most aware, was the opposition based on a religious axis and led by the political Islamists. This opposition was the most dangerous to the regime because of the immense power held by Islam as a religion, both ideologically and materially. Its power comes from its ability to resonate with the majority of the population in the region. Thus, according to the regime's logic which was aware of this resonance, this religious section of the society should be

[275] My personal observation.

prevented from participating in political activity, or should at least be monitored. For this reason, along with the techniques similar to the ones practiced in Hama (1982), the regime also resorted to means (co-optation) other than coercion (Khatib, 2011: 85). In Pierret's words, under the Assads most of these people were "either silenced or delegitimized through co-optation" (Abu-Khalil, 2013).

Where many secular opposition figures are co-opted by the government, many imams in Syria are venerated by the public. In a country where the general population does not have the right to form associations or have meetings, the mosques serve as an opportunity for social and political exchange as well as religious discussion. Due to their charity work, religious associations, *jamiyyahs*, have access to funds from the private sector. Many non-religious organizations cannot raise money without alarming the regime. This shows the potential of Islamist organizations and leading Muslim figures to oppose the government and call for democratic reform. However, as is the case with many other sectors of society, important imams have been co-opted by the government. The al-Assad regime has taken many steps to woo religious figures (Khatib, 2011: 109-144; Pierret, 2009: 70-84), for example, allowing the formation of the Sham Institute for Advanced Sharia Studies, authorizing Islamic Satellite TV, closing down the Casino in 2010, and permitting schoolteachers to wear the hijab to work in 2010.[276]

Certain high profile religious men, whose opinions are valued by the people, have been supporting the regime and therefore creating obstacles for the mobilization of the people against the regime. In Pinto's words "the accommodation between the Ba'athist rule and the growing public affirmation of Islam … allowed the establishment of governance through … co-optation … which translated into a period of relative political stability" (2013: 222). According a very prominent Sufi leader, it is another example of the regime's 'divide and rule' policy (personal communication, January 5, 2013). Since the regime had no religious qualities, it could not create its own ulama. It therefore adopted certain figures who had religious followings, thus dividing the non-radical Islamists and their followers, preventing them from forming a unified front. Examples of co-opted, pro-regime figures are the Grand Mufti

[276] For the policies under Bashar al-Assad in terms of promoting moderate Islam in the name of de-radicalization see Khatib (2011: 111-144).

Ahmad Kaftaru and Said Ramadan al-Buti (Ismail, 2009: 23). Pro-regime stances give certain advantages to the clerics including access to the media and official institutions. They also increased the span of their religious message. Ahmad Kaftaru, with Muhammad al-Nabhan, set up educational institutions that spread from Syria to Beirut and al-Anbar in Iraq (A Syrian Sufi leader, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

While the regime developed "an ambivalent relationship with Syria's Islamist milieu", both al-Assads have "sought to tame it through an alliance with moderate Sufi Islam" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 104). For instance, Ahmet Kaftari was appointed as Grand Mufti, enabling him to expand his Sufi order (A Syrian Sufi leader, personal communication, January 8, 2013). Ramadan al-Buti is another important example of this alliance. He had previously opposed the attacks on the regime during the 80's and "was given exceptional access to the media and helped to bridge the gap between the regime and the Sunni" elements of society (Hinnebusch, 2012: 105). It was a strategy to simultaneously counter both radical Islamists and the secular opposition (Abu-Khalil, 2013). As a result, Islamist intellectuals and businessmen were co-opted into the parliament. Muhammed Habash was among one of the notables in this group. Of course, the Islamists were not in any way incorporated politically (Hinnebusch, 2012: 105).

As Hinnesbusch (2012: 105) states, the Syrian regime "took advantage of the fragmentation of the Islamic public sphere, for example between Damascus and Aleppo, Sufi orders and their Salafi critics, and conservative imams and modernists, further dividing them by repressing some and favoring others". Sunni Syrians differ greatly on issues such as leadership perception, attitude towards the regime and approach to *fiqh*. In addition, there are vast differences between Sunni communities in Damascus and Aleppo. In comparison to Damascus, Aleppo displays a more independent and activist attitude towards the regime. Despite such differences, however, Sunni communities indicate that they are part of the same society, and that thanks to such an approach, separations will eventually disappear (Donker, 2010: 437; B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014; M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

Whatever it is, providing autonomy, even if in small amounts, for some religious educational institutions came with a number of disadvantages. For example, as Hinnebusch (2012: 105) puts it, this situation "had inadvertently encouraged a more Salafist Islamic current, which was dangerous to a minority-dominated regime whose legitimacy depended on the hegemony of a secular identity". This situation also paved the way for the emergence of a number of networks, particularly during the 2000's when anti-Americanism and radical components exploiting religion were on the rise.

5.3 Being Blind to the Opportunities

In the end, both society and the elite failed to recognize the existing opportunities to unite against the regime. The Ba'ath Party and the army were disadvantaged as a result of the politicized nature and lack of institutionalization; then these two actors could neither act bravely nor strip themselves of the nationalist discourse and take action.

Whatever the reason, there were two consequences of al-Assad's policies and regional developments in the last 10 years. First, some segments of the Syrian society wonders if there remains any hope (thinks that there is still hope) despite everything it has been through. Second, there was a breakdown of traditional societal alliances at the social level. It was traditionally the external forces who were always blamed for things going wrong. People do not know how to express their demands as a result of the regime's long lasting suppression. People could not have acquired a sufficient level of consciousness and awareness on how to gather and demonstrate their demands at a common base. This has provided the regime with an opportunity to manipulate at least some sections of society.

When looking at the level of social fragmentation in Syria in the wake of the divisive politics employed during both the Ba'ath and al-Assad eras, questions arise such as 'what kind of a society are we looking at now', 'which social and cultural problems have appeared', and 'how has the legitimacy perception of the public changed'. Individualism has become spread due to security-based oppression and fear.

Naturally, this situation has turned into a disadvantage for Syrians in terms of moving forward and having any potential to mobilize against the regime.[277]

In conclusion, Syria's partial liberalization was allowed only as far as it acted in the regime's interests. The requirements of permits and licenses and continuous crackdowns all served to protect the interests of the regime. As Ammar Qurabi points out, "there is no such thing as the opposition [in Syria]. There are individual activists and writers" (cited in Pace & Landis, 2009: 125). This shows how successful the al-Assad regime was in its strategy of 'divide and rule'. By preventing the formation of strong associations, parties or forums, the regime managed to divide the opposition and any possibility of a unified opposition.

In al-Assad's Syria, many manufacturers struggled to organize and defend their interests against the government. Rent-seeking coalitions, made up of various actors from the private sector and the government, hindered any activity that had potential to accelerate the economic development of the country, as a result of the state's primary objective to derive pecuniary advantage, and of the businessmen to seek unearned income through good relations with such officials. Nonetheless, this demonstrates the government's imposition of this system on society. If the liberalization were granted from above, they were acceptable. In Hinnebusch's words, taking over corporatist structures from below by indigenous forces is not an acceptable move (2000: 141). Therefore, any entrepreneur without strong connections to the regime would never be able to obtain any power. Those who were close to the regime or had friends in the regime could easily find their way out of legal predicaments as no law was put into practice (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). Combined with inequalities brought on by the nature of liberal economy, such strategies never seem legitimate at the grassroots level. Thus, a huge section of the society became the "losers of the system". Interview data suggests that the Syrian Government was the greatest obstacle to the country's development, since it preferred restrictive economic policies in favor of certain economic actors, instead of establishing politics to serve the general interests. In conclusion, the regime's domination of the private sector to such an extent either

[277] Informal interviews with several political activists.

weakens the potential opposition, as was the case with Seif, or prevents their emergence in the first place.

The Syrian people embody different ideologies and envision different futures for the country. However, their discontent with the authoritarian nature of the regime is where their commonality lies. In this context, the main focus should be on the human rights abuses taking place in Syria. It is crucial to ensure that the people are on the alert and do not rise to the bait laid by the regime. The abuses suffered by the population perpetrated by the Nusayri minority are not limited to the Sunnis. Various religious and ethnic groups in the society are subjected to similar restrictions. Dozens of published human rights reports prove this fact (Syrian Human Rights Committee, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2009, 2010; Mazlumder, 2010).[278] The al-Assad regime has taken many steps to thwart demands for political liberalization. The most common and effective method employed by the regime has been to use actual violence and physical repression. A less obvious but very influential policy has been to dominate the economy and privatize the economy using pro-regime actors. Perhaps the least obvious strategy has been the creation of modern and democratic institutions which allow short bursts of liberalization. The al-Assad regime's controlled and guided process has most influenced liberal political and social life. Their use of prominent ulama is an example of their cooptation and divide and rule policy. Lastly, the al-Assad regime's use of foreign policy has helped create the overarching rhetoric of justification. Thus, the combination of such powerful strategies which infiltrate every aspect of a Syrian's life, have been the reason for the discontent.

In this process the elite alliance has been weakened. The regime, however, compensates for this weakening by spectacular micromanaging public perception. The reconstitution of unity and deflecting attention to other issues makes foreign policy the prime tool for preventing the focus from remaining on domestic issues.

[278] These reports describe in the finest detail what happened in Syria on the issue of the human rights. These reports, including very serious accusations against Syria, are prepared regularly by non-governmental organizations.

Although there was an increasing consciousness and mobility among the public,[279] it was difficult for them to organize due to this use of foreign policy as a tool, preventing such opportunities from becoming visible. Interview data suggests that there are many free riders and people are confused. The most common question that came up in my interviews was 'Can we continue with al-Assad?' The common perception is that al-Assad wants to implement reform, but that it is foreign enemies that prevent him from doing so.

Hafez al-Assad had a wide network that in some manners sustained his contact with the public at large. By granting access to many levels of Syrian society to the economic rent or chocolate fountain (in al-Taqi's terms), Hafez al-Assad had been able to keep the society quiet. For instance, if a tribal leader were to approach the military intelligence and ask for land to cultivate, the intelligence would most likely give him a few acres of land (which is normally forbidden to cultivate) and add "you cultivate it with your tribe but no politics and fifty-fifty [splitting the profits]" (personal communication, April 24, 2013). There had been a functional redistribution of wealth within the regime, so that it was generating loyalty and taming different factions of Syrian society which had been previously left out of the social contract. There were four main forces in Syrian society: the Islamists, the Kurds, the business sector and the tribes. These four groups were controlled with the help of the chocolate fountain. The distribution function used by the intelligence services helped contain and manipulate these four groups, keeping them loyal to the regime (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). It is not possible to say that Bashar al-Assad succeeded in establishing complete loyalty. Hafez al-Assad, on the other hand, had at least succeeded in keeping different aspects of society close to him. Perhaps the biggest handicap for Bashar al-Assad is that, as a result of the policies he implemented, the number of societal and elite groups that supported him decreased dramatically. With the Ba'ath party's activities rendered ineffective in rural areas, the regime's contact with an important aspect of society was greatly damaged. In the words of the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2011), "the new generation of ruling elite having inherited power rather than fought for it, grown up in Damascus,

[279] At this point Pinto (2013: 223) argues that in spite of the fact that the reforms during the Damascus spring were "fast and ephemeral", in any case they allowed "the emergence of a public debate on democracy and political freedom that had some impact on the political idiom of the current process".

mingled with and mimicked the ways of the urban upper class", as a consequence lost touch with their social roots. Hinnebusch (2012: 102) accurately summarizes all these developments:

> The outcome was a rapid restructuring of the social base of the regime. At the heart of the regime coalition were the "crony capitalists" – the rent seeking alliances of political brokers (led by al-Assad's mother's family) and the regime supportive bourgeoisie. By so fostering its own capitalists, the regime aimed to survive the incremental transition to a partial market economy and since no significant business venture was possible without regime insiders taking a percentage, regime crony capitalists developed intimate partnerships with the wider elements of the bourgeoisie. It was this bourgeoisie, not the Ba'ath Party that funded al-Assad's re-election campaign.

All of this created a shared perception in the minds of the Syrian people, especially in rural areas, that the regime had abandoned the poor (unlike Hafez al-Assad) for the sake of the rich. This could be described as the disintegration of the social contract between the regime and the rural poor (Hinnebusch, 2012: 102).[280] For instance, interview data suggests that in two consecutive years, 2008-2010 there was a major increase in droughts[281] in rural areas In the first year (2008) there were 200 villages that were deserted (Ababsa, 2009: 33). Residents of the villages sold all their cattle and moved to the cities and nothing was done by the state to solve this problem (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). Thus, due to the "severe drought, farmers and herders have seen their livelihood destroyed and their lifestyles transformed, becoming disillusioned with government promises of plentitude in rural areas" (Saleeby, 2012).[282] In other words, for some observers the failure of the regime to take the necessary economic measures to reduce the negative effects of drought was one of the significant factors in driving mobilization against the regime (Saleeby, 2012).

[280] This particular point was raised by many Syrians in Turkey mainly emigrated from rural areas of Idlib and Aleppo. See Güçer et al (2013).
[281] For a detailed analysis of the impact of droughts on the recent uprisings see: Saleeby (2012).
[282] For Saleeby (2012), the drought is not "a consequence of climate change alone"; it is "largely a result of deliberate, top-down decisions".

The confusion of the Syrian population was important. Generally, the perception among the population was that Bashar means well, all societal ills were a result of the old guard, and that Bashar wanted to implement reforms but the foreign conjecture never allowed him the chance to do so. This also indicated that Bashar's attempts to increase the regime's legitimacy based on foreign policy were successful. Again, as a result of these methods, interview data shows how reluctant the people were to mobilize against the regime. Therefore, it is fair to say that attempts to address the "contradictions of nationalism and international economic incorporation" resulted in diversifying the economic rents and shifting social base and indeed this shift was paralleled by the "disempowerment of the traditional corporatist organizations of workers and peasants and the cooptation in their place of business groups" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 101).

Bashar's claims in his January 2011 interview that the 'Arab Spring' would not reach Syria thanks to his policies only demonstrate his arrogance and overconfidence. Indeed, his *sui generis* authoritarian upgrading had obvious "negative side-effects and costs that fuelled the subsequent crisis" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 106). In the same vein, particularly his over-involvement with foreign policy affairs caused him to neglect domestic vulnerabilities (Hinnebusch, 2012: 106).

Since Father Assad dominated through the security apparatus, he could both ensure the integrity of his authority and limit interest groups' unstable and contradictory ambitions to influence and control the state and the people. Together with Bashar al-Assad the power that was dependent on totalitarian and doctrinarian hegemony of the party and the state bureaucracy translated into a rise in the sovereignty of the mafia in Ghailoun's words, and pro-family people (personal communication, November 23, 2014). Relations between statesmen, businessmen, the military and the security forces fused. This situation was realized in parallel with the privatization and rectification of the public sector. In this way, the mafia was able to gain unprecedented economic, financial and familial power, therefore allowing it to subject the state and bureaucracy to its own interests and rationale. The fact that interest groups related to the mafia gained superiority over the state led to a looting of state and community resources without legal, political or moral repercussions. In

addition to this, the role and functionality of the state bureaucracy was thoroughly limited, which caused the collapse of state assets and public property. Then, the sense of national and public responsibility began to decline, so the existing authority did not hesitate in its acts of extravagation, in turn overthrowing the state and incinerating the country. This dynamic is explicitly illustrated in the ennobling slogan used by Assad's representatives: 'Either Assad stays, or we will burn the country' (B. Ghailoun, personal communication, November 23, 2014). Gradually, this has now become a literal reality.

PART II

CHAPTER VI, VII, VIII

CRISIS AND REDRESSIVE ACTION PHASES

CHAPTER VI

PUSHING FOR CHANGE IN EGYPT AND SYRIA

In one sense, the 'revolution' can be defined as the people unifying against the regime and toppling it within the context of power relations amongst different forces (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013).

6.1 Introduction and Argument

The 'popular' uprisings in the Arab World were at first greeted by astonishment throughout the world. Whatever their causes and no matter the distress or destruction they created, the Arab revolt has triggered a shift in the geopolitical tectonic plates, causing fractures and the arrival of a new period from which there can be no return to the *status quo ante*. It is not only the relations between Arab regimes and their people that have been turned upside down, but the strategies of global and regional powers toward the Arab World as well.

Longstanding oppression and injustice reached a breaking point for people in many Arab countries following the self-immolation of a young street vendor in Tunisia. In Egypt, the accumulation of the policies of the Egyptian regime, particularly within the last 10 years, the general bankruptcy of the state and the courage provided by the

spark of demonstrations in Tunisia necessarily triggered anti-regime protests in Egypt. The Egyptian people reached a significant stage in regards to self-fulfillment, self confidence and trust during the 2000s, crossed a new threshold following the events in Tunisia, despite the reservations of several political circles, and succeeded in tearing down the wall of fear that had been created by the regime, flowing out into the squares of Egypt. Although the regime originally underestimated the significance of the Tunisian protests, they were one of the most important sources of motivation for many activists in Egypt.

Intense mobilization that has continued in Egypt throughout the last decade (see chapter IV) found itself at its climax with the final step of a cumulative breach of Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011, followed by an 18-day crisis (Shokr, 2012: 41-46) between the state and the protesters (Holes, 2012: 391-410). In other words, the experienced non-traditional protest movements prior to the revolution contributed to the management of the protest process (Beinin, 2012a: 323-350). With regards to this T. al-Khouli (personal communication, December 20, 2012) indicates that:

> The previous year's demonstrations were the beginning of the January 25th Revolution and have built confidence in actors… Since the al-Mahalla Strikes [2008], we have tried to bring together as many young people as possible, to bring down the regime through peaceful means and to meet in public squares in order to build awareness with regards to civil disobedience.

After people took to the streets on January 25th, the mutual steps and interactions that occurred between the protestors and the state, or rather the administration's mistakes, have acted to increase this self-confidence and awareness among dissidents. Therefore, in response to the question I have set to my interviewees, "Why did Mubarak so rapidly step down?", their answers addressed several important factors. These main factors, at the end of the day, point to and converge with the perceived political opportunity structures (Kurzman, 2012: 377-390). In other words, these factors have served to make political opportunity structures more visible. Ultimately, the interactions between two sides were what forced Mubarak to resign on February 11, 2011.[283]

[283] For the details of the process in Egypt prior to the uprisings see chapter V.

On the other hand, in spite of the fact that protests remained on the local level in Syria, events in Dara'a paved the way for an even deeper crisis in the country. Starting peacefully in March 2011, unrest in Syria took on an increasingly violent nature, eventually pushing the country into an inextricable civil war (schism in Turner's terminology). The trauma of the Hama massacre in 1982, which was the most deadly action carried out by any Arab administration in the Middle East against its own people in recent times, and the years of chaos in Iraq (especially the since the second Gulf War) have rendered the Syrian people politically incapacitated and inactive. At the same time, the approximately 1 million Iraqi refugees have given Syrian people the perception of that the collapse of the regime in a religiously divided country is a great threat to ethnic and sectarian stability. In the same vein Anderson (2011: 31) underlines the importance of this perception that "the Syrian military establishment and the civilian administration are designed to support the regime. If the regime goes, you do risk what happened ultimately in Iraq". Put differently, interview data suggests that what happened in Iraq during the last two decades has demonstrated the possibility that minorities in a country like Syria might find themselves in a similar situation depending on how history plays out.[284] On the other hand, even though Syrians were hopeful with Bashar's coming to power, this hope did not last long. Particularly, the developments in the region during the last 10 years have made Syria more closed off ultimately preventing the opposition from exploiting any opportunities to mobilize itself. Nevertheless, Syria has been affected by the social and political mobilization that has ravaged the Middle East since 2010. There were major obstacles in front of the regime if it wanted to preserve the status quo as it did until that time. First of all, the people were fed up and tired of the concentration of power in the hands of a few for more than 40 years, and the cruel and violent suppression of opposing views, propaganda and unfulfilled promises that have resulted from this (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). In the previous periods, the acquiescence and hopelessness of the people were able to cover the problems, but social movements and an increase in political awareness in the Arab World have encouraged Syrians as well (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

[284] Formal and informal interviews and conversations with Syrian refugees living in Turkey.

Syrians attempted to take to the streets en masse in the mid-March after Mubarak fell in Egypt. In comparison to other countries, the low numbers of protesters were striking. Interview data suggests that even the existence of protests was a very significant step for Syrians, considering the historically high levels of suppression in the country.[285] Since the start of uprisings in 2011, the conflict remains unsolved despite diplomatic efforts and has birthed an entirely militarized Syria, with both the government and most part of the opposition in the same mind-set. Thus began a bloody process with intense intervention by various regional and global actors. The discontent which was already present for long years, was boosted by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, and began in Dara'a, evolving over time into a crisis where parties with different frames and strategies battled in order to obtain support and legitimacy. At this stage, we have seen the rise of a period of repressive action instead of redressive action by the government, causing a rise in violence and lawlessness.

One of the biggest questions we can ask is "Why didn't the Syrian uprisings play out in the same way as they did in Egypt? I have been asking myself, as a researcher focusing on these particular countries, whether we could have seen a different scenario in the Syrian drama. In other words, I have been searching for evidence as to whether or not the situation in Syria could have come to a radically different conclusion and what would have needed to happen for us to reach this conclusion. As for Turner's "social drama" approach, after a "breach" occurs, a "crisis" stage ensues where "bystanders are drawn into the conflict and are acting as antagonists and protagonists" (McFarland, 2004: 1271). These moments of "crisis" can either be short or prolonged, such as when parties reinforce the "breach" and extend it to other issues. Scholarly works suggest that one act of resistance might "snowball as latent tensions manifest and old wounds get re-opened throughout the society" (McFarland, 2004: 1271). In other words, the crisis following the initial outbreak of "breach is reinforced and expands, such that the gulf between the protagonists and antagonists becomes difficult to span with minor redressive actions and concessions" (McFarland, 2004: 1271).

[285] Participant observation in the Oncupinar Refugee Camp (February 2013).

So then, how does this crisis situation produce different outcomes in different countries, even in the countries with similar regimes? As is highlighted in the previous part, while the characteristics of societies and states in terms of their stable and structural dimension are the one important reason of this difference in outcomes, the other decisive factor is the dynamics of interactions between actors during crisis and the redressive actions that follow. While the dynamics of these interactions are influenced by the underlying characteristics of the societies and the state, they are not wholly dependent on these characteristics. Put differently, while structural factors are essential in bringing about the change, they are not the sole determinants of the result. Therefore the interactions between the various parties during crisis, in addition to the factors examined in the previous chapter, are also crucial to properly understanding the causal mechanism. When social drama occurs, tensions among parties increase and the rift deepens as each party acts to fortify its cause/position and "to draw in new allies" (Ross, 2001: 167). Most of the time new issues are often inserted as social dramas unfold and prolong themselves, with previous issues and dormant sentiments reappearing (Ross, 2001: 167). In such cases, if using the *jural* mechanism to redress the crisis or placate tensions is possible, actors might do so. It is emphasized that "ritual mechanisms of redress" play significant roles in conflict resolution, particularly "when jural mechanisms either do not exist or are inadequate because none of the competing principles are clearly more important than any of the others" (Ross, 2001: 167).

6.2 Conceptual Framework

After providing the historical, political and social contexts within which the actors are embedded in the previous section, this section will work to demonstrate how the interactions between parties during the crisis and redressive action phases of the upheavals evolved and determined the other's responses and perceptions, and finally, the ultimate outcome (Kriesi, 1995: 169).[286] That's to say, after examining the basic dimensions of the 'structure', a closer look will be directed at the positions of the

[286] The analysis of collective violence in Germany, Italy and France has indicated that violence did not so much depend on the structural transformation of society, but was linked to shifts in the struggle for political power.

actors and particularly the mismanagement of the crisis. Therefore this section will focus not on the stable characteristics of the interaction, but rather the procedural aspect of the uprising. In doing so, it will draw on interviews with individuals who have personally experienced and witnessed the Egyptian and Syrian uprisings to evaluate what has happened and how these events have affected the parties involved within the context of political opportunity structures and the framing approaches. The question of why the outcomes are different in both countries will be delineated with the help of these theoretical approaches.

The series of interactions that follows characterize a larger social progress of deconstruction and reconstruction that Turner calls a "social drama" of protest. Every social drama of protest is promulgated by actors who work intentionally and who cue cultural forms in order to guide interactions in a certain direction (McFarland, 2004: 1312). Therefore, by viewing protest and resistance as a larger change-oriented[287] process, the importance of processual units is elevated in this part of the study. In particular, how the parties framed and perceived the situation was of vital importance in this change-oriented process. The social drama approach also underlines the issue of framing. For this reason, approaching the issue as a process which was shaped by different frameworks and perceptions, eventually enables the researcher to gain a "better understanding of how situations are reproduced, altered and revolutionized" (McFarland, 2004: 1312). As Turner (1980: 151) states:

> During the phase of crisis, the pattern of current factional struggle within the relevant social group –be it village or world community- is exposed; and beneath it there becomes slowly visible the less plastic, more durable, but nevertheless gradually changing basic social structure, made up of relations which are relatively constant and consistent.

At this point Tarrow (1998: 19-20) highlights that the 'political opportunity structure' approach puts emphasis on this process. "Why do people participate in contention and why do their numbers increase at a particular time?" is one of the main questions that should be addressed. The political opportunity structure is thus a

[287] While evaluating the 'Arab Spring', A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013), as the former Secretary General of Arab League said: "It is a change; a movement for change. People wanted to change, to not continue under the same systems, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya…"

“consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent or natural-dimension of the political struggle” (Cited in Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 11). Moreover, it should also be emphasized that the redress phase “reveals that determining and fixing are indeed processes, not permanent states or givens” (Turner, 1980: 158). Indeed, for Turner (1980: 158) “these processes proceed by assigning meanings to events and relationships in reflexive narratives”. In other words, due to the fact that the issue is shaped around meanings, reflexes, narratives and perceptions, the approach I will use most in this chapter is framing. As is stated in the very beginning of this study, framing is an important concept for understanding contentious politics. As Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 12) point out, the “frames help people to define their interactions in similar terms, to give it ‘similar meaning’, and by doing so, to come together”. Thus, the basic point in framing is to bring together potential allies, to create resonance in order to be able to act in concert, and to see existing political opportunity structures or make new ones to be created. In that sense, paying attention to similarities in this way forms “a frame of alignment, ideological or cultural”, which in Snow and Benford’s words offers people “interpretive schemes … to make sense of events… guide collective action” (Cited in Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 12).

Therefore, we should draw on both approaches [political opportunities and framing] throughout this section in order to provide more comprehensive causal mechanisms with higher explanatory powers. In regards to this point, Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 13) also clearly indicate that “these two concepts [POS and framing] taken together create a system, or an interaction whole, with tremendous power to explain how and why the uprising took place”. To them, the degree and efficiency of public mobilization (collective action) in this system, for instance, “depends very much on the balance sheet of costs and benefits, constraints and opportunities”, in other words the political opportunity structure, and “whether these are acted upon collectively rather than as dispersed groups- depending on the degree of framing” (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 13).

6.2.1 The Activities of Countermovement Agents (Repression and Counter-framing)

Before proceeding into a detailed examination of the subject, it should be noted that the activities of countermovement agents and that defining functions that will be operationalized within the variable in this section provide insight towards explaining the volatile dimension of the phenomena.[288]

Apart from the relatively stable dimension (characteristics of the state and the society) of the issue that we have discussed in the previous chapters, the individuals who are in power resist reform or demands for transformation during the crisis and redressive action stages by employing framing strategies in response to the opposition in order "to revitalize tasks or at least to preserve their control over the ensuing situation" (McFarland, 2004: 1276). Therefore the agency and activities of these actors should also be taken into account. According to Brownlee (2005) and Bellin (2005), the focus should be more on elites. We can attribute the ability of personalistic dictatorships to survive to their willingness to use brutality and portray those leading the uprisings as criminals and threats to the state in order to maintain their legitimacy (Bellin, 2005: 34-36; Brownlee, 2005: 43-62).[289] This was valid during the uprisings both in Egypt and Syria. This aspect determines and shapes the perceptions, emotions, beliefs and responses of not only the protestors, but of potential allies. In this sense, it would be appropriate to use two different defining functions to define and determine the independent variable formulized as "activities of countermovement agents" so that we can measure the impact of this variable. The two defining functions that will be operationalized in this section are as follows: **(1)** activists' perceptions of political opportunities and **(2)** availibity of alliances. At this point, it should be noted that "the willingness of presumed supporters of the challenged regime to defect and give their support to elements of the challenging coalition or at least to refuse to cooperate in violent repression" is a very important factor in shaping the outcome (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 477).

[288] Please see theoretical chapter.
[289] These arguments will be taken into account while completing this dissertation.

6.2.1.1 Activists' Perceptions of Political Opportunity

As stated previously, actors' perceptions of opportunities and constraints are extremely important in affecting the final decision to act (Rootes, 1999: 11). As indicated by Gamson and Meyer (1996), "it is not simply a question of whether a political system is objectively open or closed but also whether it is perceived to be open or closed" (cited in Rootes: 1999: 10). In addition to that "even the perceived existence of opportunities and constraints does not mean that they will automatically be seized or accepted" (Rootes, 1999: 10). As Rootes (1999: 10) points out, "actors' beliefs and values may constrain them from seizing opportunities which are presented to them, and may also stimulate them to seek to create new opportunities for action consistent with their values by attempts to surmount rather than to meekly accept existing constraints". Indeed, social movements are agents of political change. They act upon existing opportunities and their actions in turn often help generate new opportunities (Jenkins & Kladermans, 1995: 4; Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 276). Therefore, encouragement or discouragement are directly related to the motivation of the opposition and are decisive in the outcome (Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 285-287; Kurzman, 2012: 377-390). In that regard, emotions play a critical role in mobilization. Pearlman (2013: 387) argues that:

> Emotions such as fear, sadness, and shame promote pessimistic assessments, risk aversion, and a low sense of control. Such dispiriting emotions encourage individuals to prioritize security and resign to political circumstances, even when they contradict values of dignity. By contrast, anger, joy, and pride promote optimistic assessments, risk acceptance, and feelings of personal efficacy. Such emboldening emotions encourage prioritization of dignity and increase willingness to engage in resistance, even when it jeopardizes security.

Both the ignorance and incorrect knowledge also have consequences in these circumstances. According to Rootes (1999: 11), "the belief that opportunities are lacking will generally discourage collective action even when the actual obstacles are few". On the other hand, he also adds that "although the erroneous belief that few or no obstacles to successful collective action exist may serve to encourage action, it will probably only rarely be sufficient to impel the creation of opportunities where none existed" (Rootes, 2009: 11). Drawing from Snow's original definition,

McAdam et al (1996: 6) suggest "the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves legitimate and motivate collective action". Sustained motivation is very critical to achieving success from protest. It should be noted here that the duration of the conflict is a factor which, as it increases, makes it difficult to continue generating motivation. For instance, the shorter duration of the conflict in Egypt enabled protestors to reach their ultimate goal without risking diminished levels of motivation. On the contrary, the longer duration of the Syrian conflict, purposefully sustained by Assad, made it difficult for the opposition to continue generating the same levels of motivation.[290] The calculations of incumbent leaders and security elites about the costs of suppressing an opposition movement should also be taken into consideration. According to Bellin (2005: 34-35), when there are not large numbers protesting in the streets, the political cost of repression is lower. When millions march against the regime without any decrease in motivation, the possibility of success or, in other words, the possibility that security forces will refuse to fire on them, rises (Bellin, 2005: 36). The role of mass media is also crucial for the opposition. In Gamson and Meyer's words "when demonstrators "chant 'the whole world is watching' it means they believe they matter" (1996: 285). Without it, how else would participants have communicated or how would news of Bouazizi spread?

6.2.1.2 Availability of Potential Elite Alliances

In this section, I will focus my empirical analysis on the actions of potential allies and opponents of the social movements in the two countries. I define the allies in this context as the political, social, and economic actors supporting the social movement. While the alliance provided resources and created political opportunities for social movements, opponents tried to alter these conditions to disadvantage the social movements. Under these circumstances, allies and opponents are not considered to be a given set of actors. It is widely acknowledged in several scholarly works that "a collective actor may change its positions vis a vis a social movement and thus shift from being an ally to being an opponent, or vice versa" (della Porta, 1995: 235-236). Moreover, as Kladernmans (1989: 302) states, "specific organizations that try to remain aloof from the controversy may be forced to take sides". Various parts of the

[290]See chapter IX.

political system such as political parties, elites, governmental institutions as well as different segments of the society (tribes, minority groups, businessmen, clerics, etc.) can merge with the opposition and join a coalition of resistance against the authority. Coalitions as volatile sets of actors "can fall apart, and previous allies can become part of the conflict system" (Kladernmans, 1989: 302).

Therefore, the perceptions of the opposition and any actual or potential allies are very significant in determining the scope of the alliance. Scholarly works suggest that if potential allies identify "the goals and strategies of collective actors as compatible with their own" and calculate "the chances of success to be high", they are more likely to take action in ways that improve the opportunities for collective action (Rootes, 1999: 11). On the other hand, if the perceptions of "potential allies diverge radically from those of collective actors, they are more likely to remain bystanders or even to obstruct what they may perceive to be counterproductive action" which is the exact case in Syria (Rootes, 1999: 11). For instance, in spite of some recent changes, state bureaucracy in Syria depends on the support of private business in order to preserve its legitimacy, and business sector in turn needs the state to protect its economic course in the face of opposition groups. As long as the business and economic elite believe that the regime will survive, they will remain supporters of the current regime (Baumgarten, 2002: 79), giving great importance to their opinions and perceptions.

Therefore, it might be argued that even more important to the shaping of an opposition movement are the perceptions of the actual or potential opponents of opposition. The responses and reactions of political elites to collective action differ depending on "their perception of the legitimacy of the aims, social characteristics of collective actors and the forms of collective action" (Rootes, 1999: 12). A central factor here is "the authorities' perceptions of the threat" that the "collective action poses either to their own security or to public order" in general (Rootes, 1999: 12). Alternatively, their perceptions of the degree of support or sympathy for collective action among the greater public, especially strategic groups, are important to their threat perception. If the perceptions of elites are important determinants of their strategic responses to collective action, so too are those of their agents, the security forces. As noted by della Porta (1996), there is a great deal of evidence that the

responses/reactions of security forces to protests "are greatly influenced by their perceptions of the threat to order posed by collective action, and that those perceptions are in turn influenced by their perceptions of the aims and social characteristics of protesters" (Cited in Rootes: 1999: 12). In the same vein Alimi and Meyer (2011: 477) note that:

> As the numbers and diversity in the streets grew, repression would be more difficult and costly; as the visibility of regime defectors increased, more diverse elements in society saw their interests served by throwing in with the protesters.

Both the perceptions of collective actors and those of their allies and adversaries should be analyzed together in tandem. Even though the perceptions of "elites and challengers can be represented in a highly schematic and stereotypical way", Rootes (1999: 12) argues that "such abstract generalizations are of limited heuristic value because perceptions are not fixed but are products of a complex process of interaction in which past actions, received reputations, present actions and declared intentions are all involved". Since this interaction is greatly "contingent" and "conjunctural" in essence, "the perceptions which are crucial to the outcomes of encounters between collective actors and others are constantly being formed and revised" (Rootes, 1999: 12).

As a result, in light of the above arguments, I will try to examine the dynamic relationship between framing and counter-framing in the process that leads to a decline in the motivation of a movement due to the relatively powerful public discourse created by the regime, as well as its physical repression. In this context, I will look specifically at the Syrian case. I will analyze not only the framing and counter-framing tactics employed by the actors, but also the material and cultural contexts in which those frames and counter-frames are constructed. Since the conflict has lasted much longer when compared to the Egyptian case, the Syrian drama provides us a more generous ground upon which to test these arguments.

The media will be treated as one of the main actors in the counter-framing process against the people on the street. I adopt Gamson and Meyer's view of the media as a part of a political opportunity structure (1996: 287). I will also illustrate how the

media strategically used the regime's master frames against increasingly popular public demands, particularly in Syria. I will demonstrate that while the use of media worked in the favor of the opposition in Egypt, it in the regime's favor in Syria. For instance, in the Egyptian case, Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 12) state that "when photographs of massive protests and the camaraderie between armed forces and protesters were widely diffused, the media –both old and new- helped to increase the strength of the existing opportunity". While the media fueled the protest in Egypt, it provided a huge opportunity for the Syrian regime. Although Syrians have been active in using social media outlets, it should be noted that as a result of the duration of the conflict, the Syrian regime has had the upper-hand in terms influencing public opinion by sustaining its propaganda through national and international media. In terms of creating "the picture of a common cause, a joint frame of action" for people far from the physical action and sympathizers abroad, being able to communicate is very important (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 12). Communication is a necessity for collective action (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 12) and an objective communication in the Syrian case particularly at the very beginning of the uprisings was very limited.

Thus, it is important to bear in mind that, as stated by Gamson and Meyer (1996), paying necessary attention to the factors that can shape the perceptions of an opportunity is of great importance in order to analyze the interactions between the opposition and the authorities. At one point, protesters can create not only their own opportunities but opportunities for their allies and opponents. National opportunity structure can also be altered from above, if the opportunities are transformed by the opposition from below. With regards to changes in the international context, it can also be argued that the opportunities for protesters within a particular country can be changed "by altering the political and economic conditions and/or the perceptions of those conditions" (Meyer, 2003: 20). Meyer (2003: 20), in his analytical studies, illustrates that "nations construct roles for themselves in international politics, which shape the sorts of claims activists can make as well as the weight that domestic unrest can bring to bear on state policy". The given international context has the leverage over the actors to prevent, for instance, states from making concessions to the opposition as a result of their pressure or vulnerability to accusations (Meyer, 2003: 20).

The political opportunity framework provides explanatory leverage for the outcomes of contention by focusing on the world outside of the social movement. It hypothesizes that most people, if not all, are most likely to take part in collective action when they believe that movement is not only succeeding, but has the potential to continue its success. Protesters "make their calculations with widely varying degrees of certainty and precision, and the decisions that arose around them make matter tremendously" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476). If institutional means of redress are prevented by the authorities, then "extra-institutional action appears to be the most promising route to influence" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476). At this point, although it may not be a good option for success, fighting against injustice may be the best way for protesters to adapt in a violent or desperate situation (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476; also see Alimi 2009; Boudreau 2004; Einwohner & Maher 2011). It can be argued that repression is more likely to be maintained and thus less likely to be used, making acting collectively much safer. Subsequently, the oppositions' chances of success appear higher when more people take to the streets. In protest, there are many factors that create opportunities such as the organizations, emotions, and identities. Yet, the question remains, how much analytical leverage is provided when energy is focused on one of these elements (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 476). In Alimi and Meyer's words:

> The specific nested configuration at any given time, and its relative open- or closedness, suggest a great deal about the stability of the state, its space of action and, in turn, the dissidents' prospects for influence. A useful way to approach this is by keeping in mind that the opportunities for dissidents in authoritarian regimes to attract international support and intervention for their cause by marketing their rebellion internationally (Bob 2005) is, to varying degree, a function of their state's political opportunity structures. These structures are themselves nested in larger regional as well as international environments that either constrain or facilitate particular kinds of opportunities for state authorities (2011: 477).

In order to "see how nesting affects the range of possible alliances and responses available to states and challengers, the nature of nested institutions" can be examined along two interrelated dimensions (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 477). According to Alimi and Meyer (2011: 478), the first dimension (structurally-laden) is "exclusivity", by

which they mean “the degree to which a state is dependent on a particular nesting institution”. To compare, they argue that “think about the high degree of exclusivity of claim exerted by NATO on Mubarak-led Egypt as a major non-NATO member ally”. The second dimension (agent-laden) is autonomy, by which they mean “the degree to which the larger institution needs the services of the nested state and the resulting maneuvering space the latter enjoys” (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 478). To compare, again they argue that “think about the high degree of autonomy Assad-led Syria has given its geopolitical strategic value to Western powers, Iran, and Russia. (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 478). It can be argued that the “tighter the integration of a given state into a larger nesting institution, the less autonomy it will have in responding to dissidents’ challenge, and vice versa” (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 478).

The situation in the region shows that even in the Middle East, a government cannot survive unless its legitimacy is provided by the people. However, according to some analysts, the potential success of the “revolution” in Syria essentially depends on the dissolution between the elite groups. The elite consist of Alawites who have significant power within the security forces and Sunnis who are involved in commerce and industry. This elite group leads both the Syrian economy and its ethnic and cultural sphere. If these two elite groups support each other and do not conflict, it will be impossible to talk about a successful popular uprising in the country. In short, one of the main factors that will determine the outcome is the possible separation of the Alawi and Sunni elite.

CHAPTER VII

TEARING DOWN THE OLD WALL OF FEAR: MILLIONS IN TAHRIR SQUARE

Those who were not participating were waiting for us from their balconies. That was a really beautiful feeling. And when we reached Tahrir, we saw the others coming from other streets. We agreed that we would do something together and we did it and it was beautiful (USAK, 2011).[291]

7.1 Introduction

It is fair to say that as a result of the developments of the last decade (2000-2010) prior to the uprisings, the Egyptian society's political awareness was on the rise, the mobility of Egyptian civil society improved, though only to a certain extent, the state apparatus grew more dysfunctional, and discord among institutions and the elite was more exposed. Nevertheless, despite this mobilization of society and the disintegration of the state apparatus, Egypt remained a country in which suppression, authoritarianism and fear ruled (Rashad, 2012: 3), as in other Arab countries (el-Ghobashy, 2011; Brownlee 2007; Blaydes, 2011). Interview data suggests that in order for the developments of 2011 to take place, there was a need for a catalyst or a group of catalysts that would trigger the explosion of breach which had grown

[291] Excerpt from Egyptian Activist Ahmed Zehran's (from al-Baradei Group) speech at the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) in Ankara. It was a conference organized by myself in coordination with the Egyptian Embassy in Ankara on Friday, March 11th, 2011. A. Zahran shared his interesting experiences from the 'revolution' period with the audiences. He described the stages of the Egyptian Revolution day by day. He also mentioned how the uprisings were organized in such a short period of time. Zahran described their communication techniques, forms of actions and the counter attacks. He concluded his speech saying that he believed that the Middle East must change in order to create a better future for itself. Moreover, he added that he would call this revolution a "Beautiful and Creative Revolution" since it gave the Egyptians the chance to better define themselves and their country.

particularly during the preceding five years. It should be underlined that the "long-standing grievances against the state from every corner of Egypt fueled the revolt" (el-Ghobashy, 2011). In this regard, it is appropriate to begin this chapter by stating that the 'Arab Spring', which started in Tunisia[292], created a suitable systemic context for change in Egypt (Shehata, 2011). In other words, the accumulation of the policies of the regime within the last decade, the general bankruptcy of the regime and the courage provided by the spark in Tunisia was necessary to trigger the anti-regime protests in Egypt (Shehata, 2011: 26-27).

As illustrated in the previous section, despite some drawbacks, Egyptian society had reached such a point of self-fulfillment and self-confidence that they were able to overcome their fears and rushed into Egypt's squares following the events in Tunisia (Hassan, 2012: 271-273). Even though the regime underestimated the effects that the Tunisian revolution would have, other scholarly works and interview data suggest that the Tunisian drama became one of the most important sources of motivation for the collective mobilization of the Egyptian public (Hassan, 2012: 267). In short, it can be said that anti-regime protests, attitudes and feelings which increased in intensity during the last years preceding the revolution (Bishara, 2012), took on a different dimension with the incidents in Tunisia (el-Ghobashy, 2011). Three main groups of actors came together in opposition against the Mubarak regime during the 18 days of protests[293], namely the "youth movements, labor movements and the political parties and movements that had been excluded from the 2010 parliament, including the Muslim Brotherhood" (Shehata, 2012: 119). Indeed, it was the cumulative impact of various forms of mobilization over the past decade that paved the way for the uprisings in 2011. In Korany and al-Mahdi's words:

> Each of those movements brought 25 January closer by bringing people together to break the fear barrier, politicizing them over the specific issues that they cared most about, reinstating the dynamics of collective resistance and active expression against different forms of abuse (social, political and

[292] Mohamed Bouazizi, a university graduate street vendor, set fire to himself in Tunisia during the final days of 2010. Though he probably did not realize it, Bouazizi had lit the fuse for a wave of uprisings which drew millions of people to the streets. Not very long after the people of Tunisia hoisted the flag of revolt, the country's dictator Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali was forced to leave the country.

[293] For a detailed timeline of the revolution see Rashad (2012: vii-xi); Aly (2012: 74-77).

> economic) and exposing the regime's exploitive policies on multiple fronts. Indeed, it could be said that the 2011 uprising had even deeper roots, since labor protests had been taking place, with various highs and lows, even before 2000 (2012: 9-10).

It was the 25th of January (2011), a public holiday, when protesters gathered in Cairo's various squares. It was routine for political gatherings to take place on this holiday, 'police day', which began in 2008 (T. al-Khouli, personal communication, December 20, 2012). The 6th of April movement organized annual demonstrations on every 25th of January just to prevent the police from enjoying their holiday and to communicate to them their feelings of deep discontent (USAK, 2011). In 2011, it was again the usual course of events (Aly, 2012: 6), however this time with a huge twist (Shenker, 2011). January 25, 2011 would become known as the "Day of Rage". Interview data and scholarly work suggest that this time, the people had been clearly motivated and encouraged by the events in Tunisia (Pearlman, 2013: 396). In this way, the annual protests which had already been organized for Police Day served a different purpose and they initiated the state's response to the crisis and their use of redressive action, which was predicted by Turner.[294] Organizers of the annual demonstrations asked themselves "why not make it bigger, why not call everyone to take to the streets…"[295] Many who had witnessed what happened in Tunisia also thought 'why not'. This "why not" attitude became the theme of the demonstrations (T. al-Khouli, personal communication, December 20, 2012). Protesters began with the sending of emails spreading slogans such as, "you have to participate, you have to do it for your children, and you have to do it for your country" (Shokr, 2012: 41-46).[296]

Once the demonstrations began, for 18 days there was very intense conflictual interaction between the protestors and state bodies particularly the security forces (police). The intensity of the exchanges between the two sides greatly impacted each side's attitude, behavior, motivations and strategies (el-Ghobashy, 2011a). Due to

[294] See chapter II.
[295] Rashad's (2012) edited volume weaves together 10 personal stories (what they experienced during the uprisings) of Egyptian activists, writers, celebrities and regular citizens into a tale of culture, courage and the fight for freedom.
[296] Several interviews with political activists from different groups, including Salafi circles.

this mobilization (el-Ghobashy, 2011b) effort and interaction, Mubarak was not able to completely comprehend what was happening and he delayed taking action, losing the support of both the military and international actors. As a loss of support, which I will study through the approaches of 'framing' and 'political opportunity structures', Mubarak was forced to leave his seat on February 11, 2011, despite the fact that this was not the original goal of the demonstrations.[297]

The interactions that took place between the two sides (challengers and the state) including both their opposing decisions and the mistakes made by the regime played an important role in generating public motivation. When we examine the answers given by interviewees when asked, "How did Mubarak fall so quickly?" some themes appear and these themes correspond to political opportunities that appeared during the uprisings (Albrecht, 2012: 261-263). Interview data suggests that there were several factors that determined the scope and the degree of the crisis, the redressive action taken, and ultimately the outcome. However, I will only concentrate on the most mentioned themes that appeared in the interviews. The arguments of S. E. Ibrahim, who is himself a sociologist, offer a general summary of the interviews. S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 12, 2012) points to three main factors that led to Mubarak stepping down in such a short period of time: 1) the feeling that the military was no longer supporting the regime, 2) growing number of people who turned against him and 3) the international pressure on the regime coming especially from the West. As it will be demonstrated in the upcoming pages, almost all of these themes helped Egyptians to recognize the related 'political opportunities' during the uprisings. Thus, after highlighting the importance of the structural factors in the previous section (chapter IV), this chapter will focus on the circumstantial and procedural elements and the ruling elite's mismanagement of the process and its corresponding interactions in which we witnessed their inability to preserve their unity.[298]

[297] Almost all the interviewees from different youth movements (Tariq al-Khouli, Ahmed Zahran, etc.) who initiated the demonstrations first told me that they did not expect a revolution. They just wanted to force Mubarak to change the Interior Minister and make some concrete reforms.
[298] Indeed when we look at Aly's (2012) study as a whole, in which he discusses the Egyptian case in a detailed manner, it is clear that the basic dynamics of the events in Egypt are implicitly summarized within the context of the breach, crisis and redressive action phases.

7.2 'Overconfident' Regime vs. 'Self-Confident' People

It is possible to assess the uprising process in Egypt through the derivation of the concept of 'confidence': overconfidence (of the regime and Mubarak) and self-confidence (of the opposition). As a result of the state of overconfidence which the regime had adopted over the last decade and the mistakes that arose as a result of this state of overconfidence (Khalil, 2011: 31), opportunities emerged that the people utilized to erode Mubarak's confidence in a very short period of time, subsequently forcing him to step down. In Khalil's words "Mubarak was basically ruling via apathy" (2011: 31).

We can see an example of Mubarak's over-confidence in an anecdote shared by B. Korany during my interview with him: "Mubarak was passing by and a journalist told him, 'The opposition is trying to protest and perhaps they might organize themselves against the regime.' In answer, he looked at the reporter, laughed and said, 'Let them have fun'" (personal communication, December 12, 2012). This is a good indication of the regime's over-confidence. The regime clearly did not expect much from the protesters. They knew they had opposition but instead focused most of their energy on the official opposition, specifically, the political parties, which the regime were not that strong. It was for this reason that the protest movement formed outside the formal societies that existed in society, even civil society organizations (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012). As Omar Soliman (Hawkins, 2011), then head of Egyptian intelligence, told journalists on February 8, 2011, in spite of the fact that the general intelligence agency kept themselves informed about the demonstrations by monitoring the internet, the agency underestimated the number of the protesters to be no more than one hundred thousand, instead of the millions that took to the streets (Aly, 2012: 9-10). Minister Adly was also astonished by the huge amount of people in the streets and described the situation as "a fact that shocked the Interior Ministry leaders and the president" (el-Ghobashy, 2011b).

It is apparent that there was already a strong basis for the uprising. As mentioned in the second part (chapter IV), people had many reasons for expecting such a situation. Particularly, as interview data suggests that the 2010 elections were a turning point in Egyptian politics. During the elections, it became clear that Gamal Mubarak was the

only candidate capable of being president, causing widespread discontent. As Korany and el-Mahdi (2012) state in their insightful book, the 'political opportunity structure' model is useful for comprehending both the evolution and the political process that occurs during a crisis situation as it unites various elements that are necessary for creating the conditions for collective dissent. During the January 25th uprisings, two vital parts of the 'political opportunity structure' can be identified: the fact that presidential elections were due to take place the same year where the only candidate would be the groomed Gamal and that shortly before the uprisings the most heavily rigged parliamentary elections Egypt had seen in decades had taken place (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012. 11). This situation was significant in regards to the position of the military officers and will be mentioned again in the following pages.

7.2.1 Tunisia as a Motivating Factor

The young people of Egypt, who had been staging protests of varying size since the early 2000s, realized after Tunisia overthrew Ben Ali that it was possible for the Egyptian regime to fall. Tunisia's victory gave them a new dose of self-confidence (Aly, 2012: 36).[299] For Peralman (2013: 396), "it was a stimulus that intensified the value of dignity and triggered emboldening effects". Throughout the last decade, the confidence of the protesters climbed with every passing day, peaking with the protests in Tunisia. At this point of time the impact of the resignation of Ben Ali was profound (Pearlman, 2013: 396). Egyptians were also able to take valuable lessons from the Tunisian experience (Hassan, 2012: 262-264) such as techniques for countering police repression and mobilizing free riders (Aly, 2012: 36). In this regard, the statements made by Ahmad Zahran are important, as he was one of the young protest leaders and someone who had previously lived in Tunisia:

> I was actually in hourly contact with my friends who were also participants in the Tunisian revolution. I have to say that this had a major effect on the Egyptian one. Egyptians always expect to be the first in the Arab region. We expect to do things first and have the Arab countries follow what we do. And the reason why what happened in Tunisia had a strong influence is twofold: One, we know that the Tunisian police is far stronger than the Egyptian police and we saw it fall in 20 days. The second reason is that we suddenly realized

[299] For Aly (2012), developments in Tunisia strengthened the Egyptians determination.

> that the Tunisians did that first and we looked bad, we had to do something. But we definitely did not plan a revolution. It was on the internet with lots of Facebook messages, lots of chats, and lots of tips from the Tunisians (USAK, 2011; also see Khalil, 2011: 145).

The passion of the youth was certainly related to the idea that if others had done it, they could do it too. Interview data suggests that Tunisia was perceived as being under an equally authoritarian regime in the eyes of many Egyptians.[300] Yet, some Egyptians such as then Chief of the Journalist Syndicates Makram Mohamed Ahmed questioned whether the protests would spread to Egypt (cited in el-Bendary, 2013: 47). In this article, he came to the conclusion that it would not happen in Egypt, because Egypt was a much more open society than Tunisia (el-Shobaki, 2011). This was again related to a misreading of the situation and an underestimation of the capability of the youth. Many such articles had been written long before the protests began, but even then people were discussing the possibility of re-enacting the Tunisian Revolution in Egypt (Aly, 2012: 10-12, 39; Lindsey, 2012; el-Bendary, 2013: 25-28, 93-97).

The Tunisian experience, as part of the greater Arab uprisings, accelerated the protests and gave hope to the people on the streets (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012), becoming an important 'political opportunity structure'. It is argued by Weyland (2012: 923) that the events in Tunisia enabled Egyptians to abandon "prudence and caution" and immediately came "to the conclusion that they could repeat a similar feat in their own country".

7.2.2 The Regime's Response: Too Little, Too Late and the Regime's False Steps *(Arrogance of Power)*

As is stated above, during the demonstrations the regime greatly underestimated the abilities of the opposition. The demonstrations played with the regime and it was for this reason that Mubarak continually reacted too little and too late. He did not realize the severity of the situation. It is clear that he did not understand what was going on when we look at his first speech (EgyptProtest, 2011). Interview data suggests that

[300] My personal observation.

the regime's ignorance as to what was happening on the ground was one of the major reasons for its downfall. The failure was also related to the regime's overconfidence which led to a mismanagement of the crisis not only in the period leading up to the uprisings but during the uprisings (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012: Aly, 2012: 38). Aly (2012: 4-6) expresses his personal observations of the regime's over-confident nature as follows:

> In the last ten days before the revolution, I met with President Mubarak on three occasions. On all of these occasions, Mubarak did not seem worried about the increasing political turmoil, leading me to play down its significance.

We can argue that during this time there was a state of 'liminality' among the ruling elite. Due to several reasons, including the 'arrogance of power', they were not able to read the signs of impending upheaval. It can be said that there is a direct proportionality between the arrogance of power and 'liminality'. Indeed, the regime failed first and foremost in identifying the crisis which was necessary for them to do in order to find a way to address the uprisings (Aly, 2012: 38). When they realized the seriousness of the situation, they found themselves in a state of 'liminality'. Moreover, "there were multiple centers of decision making, often taking different and contradictory courses of action", namely the Mubarak's close family, state security circles (led by Omar Suleiman), and the NDP (Aly, 2012: 40).

Those who participated in the January 25 protests say that prior to the protests their greatest goal was to force the Ministry of Interior to step down (International Crisis Group, 2011, February 24: 2-3). For this reason, many scholarly works and interview data suggest that it was the regime's late response to this demand that was one of their greatest mistake. For instance, Anderson (2011a: 76-77) also confirms that the initial protests that occurred on Police Day (Jan. 25) did not aim to overthrow the regime (*isqat al-nizam*) and she adds by underlining the fact that the goal of overthrowing the regime developed over the "course of time and in part because of a very heavy-handed and unsophisticated response by the government" (Also Brownlee, 2012a: 19). Similarly, many observers agree that if Mubarak had dismissed the Minister of Interior at the very beginning, then the youth on the streets

would have dispersed (Anderson, 2011a: 77).[301] In A. Shubaky's words "we started on Tuesday [25th] and Mubarak reacted on Saturday [28th]. This meant four days of waiting until the 28th. It was stupid, catastrophic…" (personal communication, December 25, 2012). Interview data suggests that Mubarak did not respond in time to the unrest because he believed it to be just another protest. This mindset can be classified an "arrogance of power" (A. E. H. Dessouki, personal communication, December 24, 2012).[302] In the same vein B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012) highlights similar points:

> Actually in the beginning they did not ask him [Mubarak] to leave, they were protesting the brutality and the corruption, the lack of social justice in the regime. The slogan "Leave, leave" came later. If at the very beginning he came with the speech that he was not going to stand for elections again... His mandate was already coming to an end in September. He did end up saying this but he said it too late.

When the regime realized that the protesters were serious about attaining their goals, it was too late. Cracks had already begun to appear within the structure of the regime's elite. By the 28th of January, police forces were running away and Mubarak shouted at the Minister of Interior (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012; Aly, 2012: 39). This is also a part of the political process. The Tunisian victory against Ben Ali paired with the regime's overconfidence caused their downfall and it was not until the regime was falling apart that they recognized the severity of the situation that it started improvising and cracking (Hassan, 2012: 267). It was when those many people decided to go out that it was too late for the regime. The difference was that during the 90's those people who were participating in the demonstrations were still young and didn't have the chance to go to previous demonstrations and those protests were usually for issues taking place outside of Egypt (A. Zahran, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

It is common knowledge that Mubarak was forced to appoint a vice-president after refusing to do so for 29 years ("Mubarak Names", 2011). When he did appoint a

[301] Personal conversation with A. Shubaky, B. Korany, A. Zahran and others.
[302] I would like to express my appreciation to A. E. H. Dessouki for discussing this phrase during the interview.

vice-president, he appointed one of his closest collaborators, Omar Soleiman, the head of intelligence (Isa, 2012: 80-86). After his meeting with Mubarak, it is contested that there was an assassination attempt on Omar Soleiman's life before the news of his appointment was announced ("Assassination attempt", 2013; "Omar Suleiman", 2011; "Egypt VP Target", 2011). Interview data suggests that allegedly the attempt came from within the regime. Soleiman was not a man who talks very much but he was on record saying that he happened to change cars after his meeting with the president and he admitted that if he had taken the same car after the meeting he could have been killed (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012). There were rumors that the people around Gamal Mubarak thought that if the vice-president was the head of intelligence then the chance that Gamal would succeed his father would be greatly reduced. Therefore, it is believed that Gamal's associates tried to eliminate the newly appointed vice–president before the news even became public (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012). Thus, all the factors, including the overconfidence and decomposition of the regime, should be considered while looking at the greater process.

In addition to these cracks, the regime was not able to implement the 'correct' strategies to counteract the protests, another result of the overconfidence. For instance, the regime was not able to understand the huge role the internet was playing in the protests, a tool that had been utilized during Ahmed Nazif's appointment as Minister of Communication and then Prime Minister in the last decade (Abdulla, 2007). In Anderson's words:

> … he [Nazif] was pushing information technology communications for the last ten years or so. Everybody –even the most bitter opponents of the regime- acknowledge that the Mubarak regime fostered an environment in which there was relatively open access to the internet. In that sense, it was government policy that actually created the seeds of its own destruction (2011a: 68).

The regime never imagined the internet would turn into a weapon in the hands of the people. It was too late when the regime discovered that what was available to them in their offices, was also available to those in the streets (Q. Said, personal communication, January 3, 2013). The regime was taken by surprise when it realized

the size of the protests and moved to improvise (Lynch, 2014: 7). It was for this reason that the regime did not have a solid plan of action to counter the protests.

It was within this atmosphere of 'liminality' that Mubarak government authorities cut off cell phone and internet services on January 28 ("Egypt Shuts Down", 2011). For Anderson (2011a: 16) this was a meaningless strategy, according to her, "what turned out to be the crucial mistake". In Brownlee's words "it was a feeble attempt to halt mobilization and the move backfired, infuriating citizens who might otherwise have remained uninvolved" (2012a: 19). In the same vein, interview data suggests that suspending mobile phone and internet service for over four days became an additional opportunity for protesters. Some members of the older generation told me during conversations that: "they cut off the Internet. We were always worried about our kids and we were trying to calm them down. We tried to take them off the streets like all parents did" (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012; Also see Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 11). At this point, we can see a clear difference between the mentality of the new generation and the older one. When the mobile phones suspended, many parents stopped receiving news about their kids. When their cellphones were working, they were in contact all the time with their children. However, once their internet and cellphones were cut off, they too took to the streets. Interview data suggests that when they went into the streets they realized how brutal the police were and they too were moved to protest. They realized that after all, the regime was a violent, oppressive regime and that their kids might be right.

As a result, it was not just the youngsters who were in the streets. The older generation began to support their kids and brought blankets, food, drinks to their children during the protests. It was with this that it transitioned from a young people's (from various ideologies and backgrounds) (Shehata, 2012: 105)[303] (overwhelmingly youth demonstrations) protest movement to a popular revolt (el-Ghonashy, 2011a), or in Mostafa's (2011) terms, a "civilizational model of revolution"[304] against the regime. Aly (2012: 23) argues that "while the MB

[303] Shehata (2012) argues that youth movements were able to overcome many of the traditional weaknesses of the Egyptian opposition by adopting a cross-ideological discourse.
[304] N. Mostafa, who has four books about the topic, argues that this civilizational model of revolution gathered all the different segments of society in a harmonious way, reflecting the best part of Egyptian civilization and culture. For her, Egyptian civilization and culture are based on harmony.

represented the bulk of the force in numerical terms and in terms of impact, it was the participation of other opposition parties that transformed the youth protest into a full-fledged revolution". As B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012) points out, some of the regime's improvised responses backfired against them. Hence, the "severing of communication channels was transformed from a constraint into an opportunity…." (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 11; also see Anderson, 2011a: 16). In this way, it is clear that the opposition could not be prevented from recognizing the new 'political opportunity structure' that emerged due to the *liminality* of the regime.

7.2.3 Collapse of the Prime Institution: Withdrawal of the Police from the Streets

After the Egyptian youth discovered how to use the internet as a weapon, they began to use it to mobilize people. It worked extremely well and the use of internet for mobilization reached its heights during the call for demonstrations on the 25th of January (el-Bendary, 2013: 22). During the first demonstrations, the struggle on the ground took place between the protestors and the police. Interview data suggests that during the uprisings, protestors were provided help from an exiled police officer named Omar Afifi Suleiman, who had been living in the US ("Former Egyptian", 2011).[305] He began to tweet and blog, directing the protesters: "Alright go on the 25th of January stage your protest but do it through the technology of street politics that has evolved" (Omar Afifi, 2011).[306] Afifi, who left the country because he did not agree with the police management and with the police brutality, provided the protesters with lots of technical information on the police forces, sending videos of himself to protesters (Omar Afifi, 2013a, 2013b). This situation constituted a 'political opportunity structure' since it enabled the protestors to determine more effective protest methods, in the sense that they were instructed on what to do. The protesters also were helped by the Tunisian protestors on how they should interact with the police. Ahmed Zahran (USAK, 2011) explains this as follows:

[305] Both S. E. Ibrahim, who knew him very well and A. Zahran, who did not know him, underlined the importance of the help coming from Afifi.

[306] S. E. Ibrahim was in close contact with Afifi in the US. S. E. Ibrahim (personal communication, December 12, 2012) told his affiliation with him to me as follows: "When I went to Washington as an exile between 2007 and 2011. Omar Afifi became close to me in the last 3-4 years. When he escaped Egypt as an exile himself, I helped him get asylum in the US. So he became kind of a close associate shall we say? He was a nice guy, kind of a big bird policeman".

> They [Tunisians] told us a lot about how to deal with the tear gas bombs, electric batons, security trucks and so forth. Because not many of us had experience with dealing with those kinds of things, at the end of the day you need that kind of technical information to be capable of facing the huge numbers of the police force with their sticks and tear gas bombs and so on.

Interview data suggests that during the protests that had occurred previously in Egypt between 1995 and the 2000s up until 2010, the size of the typical demonstration would be between 3,000 and 10,000. The typical scenario would see the protestors go to *Tahrir Square* to gather (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012). The riot police would then try to disperse them by using water cannons, beating, or tear gassing them, occasionally using live ammunition. During this protest, however, Afifi kept telling the protestors that they should break away from the typical line of events and continue to push for their demands.[307]

Omar Afifi advised that the people push for a different result. He suggested starting protests in 5 or 6 different squares and that protesters begin to march on Tahrir from different directions once they got 2-3 thousand protesters in each square. He knew that by using this strategy, protesters would confuse the riot police and they would not have enough men to deal with people marching from 5 or 6 different gathering places. In order to compound the effectiveness of this strategy, Afifi pushed for the protestors to remain in the streets for 2-3 days (quoted in S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). The protesters put Afifi's advice into action and it proved successful. In Zahran's words:

> What happened on the 25th of January at 2p.m. is that we were getting ready to get out of the café and we saw the police right in front of us. And then suddenly from nowhere, all the people building up on the small streets right next to that fancy neighborhood started coming out running. … Hundreds of people running, really sprinting from the left hand side, and the police was taken by surprise and was really shocked. And they did not know what to do

[307] "When you went to Tahrir, riot police surrounded you and after 4-6 hours everybody became tired, the protesters get tired from the tear gas and hunger and so on… This ends as the day ends" (cited in S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012)

> because suddenly the lines[308] did not make any sense. They had to run to those guys so, as soon as they started running to them it was over. … We were capable of gathering all the people in the café to go out freely because there was no police anymore and the same happened or other people as well. Around 2000 young people running from the narrow streets… (USAK, 2011).

Indeed, interview data suggests that this "capillary" (in el-Ghobashy's term) strategy was very effective (2011a). Even one of Egypt's most prominent political scientists, N. Mostafa, describes the strategy implemented by the protesters as a "battle". She states that:

> They were very brilliant. They have started from different parts of Cairo. They had different roots and first were small in numbers. They asked for liberty. After sometime people around them gathered and walked with them to the Tahrir Square. As a battle, it should be studied as a battle. This is the Tahrir and they are coming. Police surrounded all this area. The others have one goal; go in and stay (personal communication, December 19, 2012).

Afifi, being a former police officer, was well acquainted with the internal workings of the police and could describe to the protesters the differences between policemen and police officers. Police officers are the graduates of the police academy with stars and ranks, generally holding prestigious positions. However, policemen are just normal conscripts and usually do not receive very good treatment. Policemen are not paid well and they do not receive good meals.[309] Afifi knew all of these details and he realized that sooner or later the policemen would get tired of their poor treatment, lack of sleep and long hours with inadequate food. He advised the demonstrators to befriend them, to offer them food and to tell them that they were protesting on their behalf and on the behalf of their families and people like them (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). Indeed this method proved effective for them. An activist from the Baradei group, Ahmed Zahran (USAK, 2011) said:

> Every time we pass by the police they did nothing. We clapped for them and thanked them. We wanted them to feel that we are communicating with them.

[308] The police organized itself so that the soldiers stood in many different lines right next to each other with their armor read, creating a kind of psychological barrier.
[309] My personal observation.

> We would shake hands with the officers and we wanted to say that we do not have a problem with them … They come from poor backgrounds and it is done on purpose to make sure that they do whatever they were told and have no ideological background.

As a result of the above-mentioned 'political opportunity structures', the crowds in the streets grew markedly. In parallel to this, the police forces' effectiveness began to decline both in moral and energy, which can also be considered another 'political opportunity structure'. These factors led to the development of conflict among high-level bureaucrats in the state apparatus. Consequently, the coherent relationships between the elites and state institutions broke down along with their ability to move in concert. In that sense, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that "the president's position was undermined by the rift that grew between him and his minister of interior, Habib al-Adly" (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 11-12).[310] Scholarly works illustrate that "it was further eroded when Mubarak ordered the armed forces into the streets" (Brownlee, 2012a: 12). The police were therefore physically removed from the picture. By that time the Ministry of the Interior collapsed, it was not only the policemen who had abandoned their posts. Khalil (2011: 177) identified this "as the exact turning point" in the uprisings. Interview data suggests that the Ministry as a formal 'structure' had collapsed, ceasing to exist as an institution. Interview data also demonstrates that there was a huge security vacuum in the streets. The police stations were ransacked and even lit on fire ("Protesters torch", 2011). Some of the policemen had lost their superiors and abandoned their posts as well (Fathi, 2011: 23-24).

As is stated in the beginning of the chapter, nobody thought that these protests would develop into a revolution. In other words, they did not imagine that Mubarak would be forced to step down. The strategies and the attitudes of the state institutions influenced not only the protesters' thoughts, but their emotions and perceptions. Georges Fahmi (personal communication, December 25, 2012), an activist and a

[310] It is widely acknowledged that particularly setting hired thugs (*al-baltagiyah*) against the demonstrators brought "notoriety to Mubarak's longest serving Interior Minister" (Brownlee, 2012a: 12). This is not a recent phenomenon. Using thugs was a very frequent tactic, see Williams (2005).

political scientist, describes this as follows in a very direct way particularly with regards to the withdrawal of police forces:

> … when the police withdrew on January 28th, that was the sign that "let's go to the street, it is our chance to change everything. … it was the opportunity either you take it now or it will go forever. So, that is why everybody thought 'let's invest in this'.

Mubarak's previous policies were what rendered the police the primary actor in these kinds of situations. Since the police stayed out of the equation, Mubarak was left with no choice but to rely on the army (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012). However, the army too refused his orders to fire on the people. Mubarak, who had lost the support of the police as the main security component of the regime and whose moral and motivation was declining, could not find another component which would compensate for the loss of the armed force of the police. For this reason problems began to arise between generals in the army and Mubarak (see upcoming pages for further details). The SCAF (Egypt's army) held two meetings during the demonstrations. The first meeting was led by Mubarak who still had the power, as he was the Supreme leader. The second meeting was conducted by the Minister of Defense where Mubarak was not present (Kandil, 2012a: 193). This was an important indicator that he was losing power. At the end of the day, in Korany and el-Mahdi's words, the "fragmentation within the governing elite continued and intensified as leading figures were sacked or jumped ship … and the Mubarak regime "seemed to be on the run" (2012: 11-12). In this sense, the interview data suggests and the scholarly works state that "the protesters could smell that victory was close" (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 12). To put it more scholarly, it could be said that the 'political opportunity structures' were present and seen by the protestors.

The fact that the police retreated from the streets and the army declined to resort to coercion constituted a 'political opportunity structure' in favor of the social movement. Additionally, the way in which the army took to the streets displayed a sense of brotherhood between some members of the army and the protestors, creating another 'political opportunity structure' for the people in the streets. Photos of people and tanks were everywhere ("Egyptian protesters", 2011). Photographs taken in the

streets of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities showed "scenes of camaraderie between the armed forces and the protestors" (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 11-12). Interview data suggests that many people who saw this mobilized against Mubarak. The army's stance was perceived as a clear message that they stood with the people which made a huge difference. A. Zahran (USAK, 2011) stated the following while he was explaining the interactions that took place between the army and the people:

> People from everywhere had to go to Tahrir Square to pass by and take some photos. A joke was circulating that the army decided not to lift the curfew until they make sure that every Egyptian had a photo on the tanks. The way we dealt with the revolution was very spontaneous but it showed how different we are from what we thought we were. And that was quite an achievement.

The role of the army was appreciated by the young generation and they supported the army by saying "*al chaysh wa shab vahidah*" (the youth and the army are united) (A. Shubaky, personal communication, December 25, 2012).[311] Since at the time the police were completely withdrawn, the people on the streets and the *mayadeens* (squares*)* were expecting the military to protect the 'state' and the 'people', which they did.[312] In Georges's words "the tanks surrounded the square and they were checking the people, making sure that nobody had guns. Except on the second of February (Camel Battle) (el-Bendary, 2013: 67-82) when supporters of Mubarak came… but before that they came to protect the square" (personal communication, December 25, 2012; also see Shokr, 2012: 44).

Thus, it can be argued that "the effort to isolate the army ultimately backfired because passing the responsibility of domestic repression from the military to the police weakened its coercive power" (Kandil, 2012b: 8). Moreover, "the substitution of officers with crony capitalists in leading government posts imposed unbearable

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[311] It should be noted that up until August 2012, the *Majlis al-Askeri* was a hero in the eyes of the people. Tantavi didn`t interfere, he didn`t support Mubarak. But as N. Mustafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012, May 30, 2016) says, everyone gradually discovered that the Askeriye was not a part of the revolution, it was not a revolutionary force. It is a part of the old system. It is the core of the old system. He instituted revolutionary changes in the system. He tried to preserve as much as he could of its roots and its weight in the society. In Mostafa's words "this is what has been done by very big demonstration here all February, March, April, June, until August. It was very heavy oppression." So the *Askeriye* lost its prestige among the people. Suddenly society was divided into two poles. (But this topic is out of this dissertation's scope)

[312] Personal communication with many young activists who were in Tahrir Square during the uprisings.

austerity measures on the population" (Kandil, 2012b: 8). As a result of these two processes as Kandil underlined that the uprising was welcomed by the armed forces, rather than repressed (2012b: 8).

7.2.4 The Use of Repression and the Case of the Camels

During the Egyptian uprisings, 846 were killed and 6,467 were wounded between January 25 and February 16 (Cited in Aly, 2012). The use of violence by the regime remained rather limited compared to the other regimes, because everything was broadcasted internationally and followed explicitly.[313] In Lindsey's (2012: 53) words "almost every minute of the revolution was televised". Interview data suggests that there was no reason for either side to be confused. There were live broadcasts in Tahrir square for 24 hours. The cameras offering full coverage of the events in the square were positioned from the balconies of the buildings, which saw Tahrir.[314] This coverage helped to motivate the people by showing them what was happening. Furthermore, the violence only lasted a short period of time and was shown all over the world (el-Bendary, 2013: 53). The presence of international media in Egypt as well as the local media served the purpose of the challengers, spreading the events they were experiencing all over the world and Egypt (Lindsey, 2012: 54). Media was used similarly during the violence in 2010, most specifically Khaleed Said's case when he was beaten to death by the police. Footage of the attack was posted on YouTube and this increased anti-regime sentiments before the elections which were held the same year (Asmaa Mahfouz, 2010).[315] In that regard, Muhammed Diab's statement bears weight:

> If I had to pinpoint when I officially became part of the Egyptian revolution, I would say that it was when I joined the Facebook page "Kolona Khaled Saeed" (We are all Khlaed Saeed), which was built to commemorate an innocent young Egyptian who suffered immense torture before dying at the hands of Egyptian police in June 2010. The pure injustice of his history moved me (cited in Rashad, 2012: 7).

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[313] It is of course misleading to speak of a non-violent revolution in Egypt. Yet, there is a key difference between the non-militarized upheavals and the decision by the Syrians to take up arms (Lynch, 2014: 12).
[314] My personal observation.
[315] This may be the most watched video of the killing posted by Asmaa Mahfuz, a very famous Egyptian activist.

Interview data suggests that the active involvement of the media during the protests and their dissemination of images of the protests led many more to take to the streets as well as impacting the ability of the regime to use violence because of its increasing cost. It should also be taken into consideration that incumbent leaders and their security elites also make calculations about the potential costs of suppressing protesters/challengers. According to Bellin (2005: 34-35), when there are not large masses taking to the streets, the political costs of repression are lower. As when millions march against the regime without losing their motivation, the possibility of success or, in other words, the possibility of the army refusing to fire on them, rises (Bellin, 2005: 6). Thus the violence which was used during the uprisings had the opposite impact of what the regime intended. Instead of "instilling fear, the violence of the pro-Mubarak forces actually galvanized the opposition" (Cook, 2012: 288). In any case, for el-Ghobashy (2011a) "police violence catalyzed further popular mobilization". In Shehata's (2011) words "the Mubarak government first met the protests with violence, but its vast security apparatus soon crumbled in the face of an overwhelming numbers of protesters". Much of the violence caused international actors to put more pressure on the regime in Egypt to cease its oppression of the people, pushed more people to join the ranks of the protesters, and accelerated the disintegration of the regime. In the same vein, interview data suggests that the violence served as another 'political opportunity structure' by increasing the motivation of the opposition, allowing them to mobilize greater numbers of people. Korany and al-Mahdi (2012: 11) share similar sentiments in their analyses:

> The POS was strengthened by police brutality and heavy-handedness, which increased the volume of protestors to such an extent that police forces were overpowered and routed. It was bolstered again by the hesitation and division within the political elite, even at the highest levels.

7.2.5 Media as a Political Opportunity Structure

To evaluate the role of the media from another angle, because of the opportunities that presented themselves to protestors, the counter-framing strategy utilized by the state which tried to paint opposition in a negative light (Lindsey, 2012: 56-57; el-Bendary, 2013: 48-52) was ineffective on both national and international actors. The Egyptian state, like the other authoritarian regimes, wanted "to use propaganda and

fear-mongering to scare the population back into its embrace, but failed" (Shehata, 2011). Additionally, both national and international independent media helped to spread the demands of the protesters and became effective with the help of both international media and their own news sources (el-Bendary, 2013: 30). The protesters had the support of the media. The media coverage allowed them to get the support of both national and international actors', so that a 'perceived political opportunity structure' was created by widening the alliance of the movement.

It should be noted that there was a partial opening of the press and television stations in Egypt in the early 2000s (Cook, 2012: 192-200). Despite this slight opening, the government continued to control and limit the press through censorship by way of orders from the Ministry of Information. The exclusion of the opposition from the political scene via the fraud and strategies implemented by the National Democratic Party in "2010 was accompanied by crackdowns on the media, cultural expression and university life" (Lesch, 2012: 24). Despite these crackdowns and restrictions, as Anderson (2011a: 13) correctly states, "there was a contagion effect in the region that was partly facilitated by the availability of information that would not have been as easily available ten years ago".

Furthermore, through the use of media, protestors successfully convinced different sections of society to join the uprisings. Framing strategies of protestors served their purpose, because they utilized different channels of communication such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook in which they could circulate their ideas (Lindsey, 2012: 54-55; el-Bendary, 2013: 19-24).[316] Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 10-11) summarize this situation as follows:

> It was clear how the protesters used their networks not only with each other but with the media for spreading their messages during the January 2011 protests in Egypt. Social media, connections with local and international media were effectively used. Labor activists who already had been protesting capitalized on their networks in workplaces. Particularly, human right activists mobilized the support of the global civil society (2012: 10-11).

[316] It is noted in Aly's study, "there were 93 million revolution related tweets within Egypt and between Egypt and the rest of the world" between January 10 and February 10 (2012: 22).

The football fan clubs were also some of the most important actors in both Tunisia and Egypt because they were already organized and offered some structure and leadership to the demonstrations in a landscape where there was no defined leadership (Dorsey, 2012: 411-418; Aly, 2012: 24). According to many activists, one of the biggest victories was that one of the groups managed to convince the supporters of the biggest soccer team to join the uprisings. They were able to organize in the stadium and convinced them to participate. The football clubs were one of the actors that helped the revolution to succeed on the ground (USAK, 2011). This point is also mentioned by Korany and el-Mahdi (2012: 10-11) in their academic study as follows:

> Football fan groups like the Ultras also used their organizational structure and police combat tactics as remarkable resources to "capture the space for protest in Cairo" and to protect other protesters from police brutality.

7.2.6 The 'National Army' of the People: Military's Evolving Position

> *"No one can say that the revolution could be done without the military" (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012).*

Many social scientists today argue that unrest and social disintegration arise due to rapid modernization and thus, it is inevitable that revolutions will take place. However, as Skocpol and Tilly put it, social movements that are generated by participants from the lower strata of society are not capable of turning unrest into effective political action without resources that will enable an autonomous collective organization and efforts to sustain the movement (Skocpol, 1994: 133). Thus, there is no doubt that what happened during the Egyptian revolution became an expression of a staggering popular revolution that existed beyond the power of Egypt's political organizations (el-Ghobashy, 2011). The weak point of this revolution was the lack of organizational leadership that would have enabled the production of revolutionary action alongside a political agenda which would have allowed them to realize their objectives (al-Bishry, 2012: 206). In other words, the Egyptian popular revolution needed the ability to organize itself in order to fulfill the objectives it had set out for itself. In this context, it seems that the army, as an organized power within the state system, had become the prominent organized force that would protect the movement

(albeit for a short while) and accelerate Mubarak's downfall (Kandil, 2012a: 175-197). The attitude of the military had a very important effect on the success of the revolution. In fact, while the wave of protest was an important factor, the attitude of the military had a determining effect on Mubarak's departure (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012; A. E. H. Dessouki, personal communication, December 24, 2012). It is widely acknowledged that "fearing that more violence would hurt the military's legitimacy and influence, the army broke with Mubarak and forced him to leave office" (Shehata, 2011). Therefore, one of the real fault lines of the revolution has been the decision of the military to support the people. In this manner, political scientist N. Mostafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012), known for her Islamist inclinations, also expresses that the revolution would not have been possible were it not for the military.

Interview data suggests that the army's support of the protestors and the revolution through military intervention paralyzed the police force that was Mubarak's most important tool for repression. Thus, the police forces' loss of their political function was limited only to the task of providing security. This factor instigated a long-term period of confusion among the police apparatus (al-Bishry, 2012: 207). Accordingly, the army, which played a major role in the ouster of Mubarak, has continued to be one of the determining actors in the period following the revolution.

Some interpreted the non-intervention of the army at the beginning of the revolution as they were waiting for the weakening of the police so that they could then implement a non-violent intervention and get rid of Gamal and his cronies (S. Abdelfettah, personal communication, May 3, 2013). In this regard, A. Soliman (personal communication, December 23, 2012), a former general in the Egyptian army, states that "the army helped the revolution by refraining from an action against itself". In addition, certain soldiers claim that former Minister of Defense Tantawi refused Mubarak's command that the army intervene against demonstrators as a result of his fear that his soldiers would refuse to comply with the demand. It is clear that Tantawi calculated the consequences of the use of violence or decided against it. Interview data suggests that there was a vital need for such a calculation because a Tiananmen Square type of massacre would have isolated the whole Egyptian state

from the outside world, catalyzed further defections from the core of the regime and drawn more and more protesters into the streets (Brownlee, 2012a: 18).

According to Brigadier Shafiq al-Banna, former curator of the presidential palaces, the Minister of Defense went to Tahrir square (Kirkpatrick & Sanger, 2011) and met with the low-ranking military officers when the army refused the orders of Mubarak. During the meeting, the minister asked one of the military officers: “What would you do if someone ordered you to open fire on demonstrators?” The officer answered: “I would remove my uniform, and shoot the one who told me to fire on the people” (“Hiwar mea’ Shafik”, 2013). The upper echelons of the army were concerned about people who might be forced to change sides. Interview data suggests that this is because Gamal Mubarak's team could have exploited this situation and the military commanders could have been chosen as sacrifices. This is also because of the fact that there was a widespread belief prior to the revolution that some military commanders would be forced to resign in the case that C. Mubarak became President (S. Abdelfettah, personal communication, May 4, 2013). This fear stemmed from the fact that C. Mubarak's team had previously done so, forcing out members of the ruling NDP. Based on this, M. el-Zayat (personal communication, January 3, 2013) states that the military authority was uncomfortable with the procedures in place for bequeathing power and the military commanders were worried about paying for the cost of this bequeathing project. The military’s professed solidarity with the revolution was driven by tactical and public relations calculations. According to Brownlee (2012a: 18), the officers did not realign in favor of a democratic regime change, nor did they relinquish their sovereign status in the Egyptian political system.[317]

Immediately after Mubarak was forced from office, for the first time the army commanders came face to face with the demands of the people and the challenges these demands imposed. One of the commanders’ main concerns was that the demands for the prosecution of the symbolic names of the corruption might have led to them being accused of association with corrupt actors (S. Abdelfettah, personal communication, May 4, 2013). The military commanders were worried that the

[317] The military coup staged in July 2013 proves this argument.

opening of the corruption files would cause a decrease in their popularity and open a debate on the need for new military commanders. In this regard, S. Abdulfettah (personal communication, May 4, 2013), former advisor to Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi and a political scientist at Cairo University, points out that "those who benefit most from the economy are the top-ranking commanders of the Military Council. They were the part of the system, including Mubarak as well, in order to satisfy themselves, they were loyal to his political system".

As a result of the interviews that I conducted with Egyptians, I can argue that the military had its own agenda which was to prevent the passing of power from Mubarak to his son Gamal. Apart from other reasons that will be explained below, at least Mubarak was part of the military establishment. His son Gamal, however, was an outsider. In S. E. Ibrahim's words "the military in Egypt had this kind of self-aggrandizement that if you aren't from the military you are not tough or good enough, similar to the Turkish military" (personal communication, December 12, 2012). We can deduce that they were in line with the demonstrations as far as preventing Gamal's inheritance of power. In Mubarak's second speech, he said that he just wanted to stay in power until they could hold a new election and choose a new president. He also stated that in this new election, no member of his family or himself would be a candidate (Muhammed Azab, 2011). Yet, even this was not good enough for the demonstrators who kept on adding new demands until he was finally forced to step down (Drogin, 2011). At this point the military had gotten what they wanted. They made sure there would not be a non-military figure at the head of the state (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). In this regard Kandil (2012b: 206) makes a very interesting point:

> Despite the fact that perhaps twelve million Egyptians participated in the eighteen day uprising, decades of police repression ruled out the possibility that an organized revolutionary movement could have emerged to lead the way. If the military had not sided with the people, it is doubtful that the revolt would have persisted long enough to convince the political leadership it had to step down. And if intra-regime relations were not volatile due to the simmering power struggle within the ruling bloc, the military would not have turned its back on its political and security partners at this critical juncture.

For this reason, the rivalries that arose among the institutions and elites constituted a 'political opportunity structure', though indirectly, because of the consequences they created. Despite the existing antagonisms, at the beginning the army was not decidedly against Mubarak. In Brownlee's words, "neither the generals nor the rank and file were expected to defect from the regime in the absence of a crisis" (2012a: 16-17). Conversely, they did not attempt to take to the streets and fight the people in order to protect the Mubarak regime. There was a red line there. According to Retired General Q. Said (personal communication, January 3, 2013), the Egyptian army knew its job well. To Q. Said, from the time of Nasser to the Mubarak era, people have taken to the streets many times for many different reasons, particularly for prices of bread (personal communication, January 3, 2013; Brownlee, 2012a: 11). He underlines the fact that "in all of these cases the army forces went to the streets just to control the situation. They never fought against the people and in every single occasion, thanks to the position of the army, the president had to make some concessions to the people" (personal communication, January 3, 2013). According to el-Ghobashy (2011) the popularity of the army "rests on its reputation for professionalism" which cannot be said "for the corrupt police force" brutalizing its citizens. Here it is essential to note that the army in Egypt is not designed to protect the regime. In Aly's words "the army and its leadership were worried about the country and its stability" (2012: 40). A prominent scholar of Middle East politics, L. Anderson (2011a: 26), clarifies this point when discussing the role of the militaries in Tunisia and Egypt:

> Like the civilian administration, the militaries in both of these countries [Tunisia and Egypt] were relatively strong, relatively coherent and relatively well disciplined. And they saw themselves as protectors of the nation and the state, not the regime, an important distinction. When pressed, they were prepared to sacrifice the regime for what they believed to be the good of the state.

It is also necessary to underline that the army is seen as a national army. Interview data suggests that there is intense contact between society and the army and that the former embraces the latter.[318] It is fair to say that Egyptians love their army since

[318] Interview data suggests that all past revolutions in Egypt have resulted in some form of prosperity for the state and the people. The first of these occurred between 1801 and 1805 when the British and

they think that it had a major contribution to their history (A. Zahran, personal communication, December 12, 2012). Every single interviewee (with few exceptions), even the Islamists, began his or her response with almost the same sentence: "The Egyptian army is the army of the people" (M. M. Akef, personal communication, December 20, 2012; C. el-Haddad, personal communication, December 26, 2012).

From a different point of view, we can argue that the army found it difficult to continue as usual for two reasons. According to N. Mustafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012), these two reasons are as follows:

> Perhaps the army itself would be unstable from the inside. You have to pick one or the other. Go against the people or to go against Mubarak. To go against the people would not be accepted by the Egyptian army which might pave the way to a military coup. The second, the leader cadre of the army refused Mubarak and the control of businessmen over the regime. It shout be noted that the military institution is itself like a large corporation.

The competition between the army and the businessmen was also another factor which was directly related to the issue of inheritance, reinforcing the army's opposition to Gamal Mubarak's succession to power (Shehata, 2011).[319] In any case, it is worth noting that although the state normally enjoys and maintains the capacity

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French left Egypt when Mohamed Ali came to power. He was the commander of the Albanian troops of the Ottoman Army, of which Egypt was a member. Under those circumstances, a part of the state established a certain level of sovereignty by cooperating with society which could be acknowledged as a revolution. That revolution was realized with the strong support of the society, as *al-Azhar*, tradesmen and the *ulama* of *al-Azhar* were part of the Ottoman Army. Mohamed Ali was also affiliated with the army and he was forced to join that movement due to his popularity. The second revolution was the outcome of the social movement of 1881 and the Urabi Pasha Revolt that took place within the Egyptian Army. During the 19th Revolution, the army did not play any role followed the Urabi Pasha Revolt. When the question of why the army did not act with the public is examined, it can be observed that the army was in Sudan at that time in order to retake Sudan, and at the same time, the British were invading Egypt and exiled 3/4-4/5 of the Egyptian Army to Sudan as a way to have authority over Sudan. Subsequently, the Egypt Army remained in Sudan while the British Army was in Egypt. That was the situation at that time, but civil servants participated in a 10-15-day boycott and civil disobedience during the 19th Revolution, forcing the British High Commissioner to recognize the independence of Egypt. Hence, even though Egypt did not have a presence of statehood, recognition of its independence became inevitable and the country took its power from its own revolution and revolutionists became successful by their own efforts. Conversely, during the 1952 Revolution, the army started the revolution from the inside, declared the Republic of Egypt a "rescued" country from the kingdom and took its power from the public. This was welcomed by public with complacency (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013).

[319] Divisions among the elite over questions of succession were very solid and real.

to either co-opt or repress dissidents, sometimes even providing concessions, when the alliance of the elite is not in full agreement as to the course of action, the protesters "have the opportunity to persuade, undermine, or coerce the state" (Meyer, 2003: 21).

7.2.7 The Role of Judiciary in the Uprisings

During the Egyptian revolution, the judges opposing the Mubarak regime played a substantial role. For instance, when The Military Council assumed authority after Mubarak's downfall, it appointed T. al-Bishry, a name with great symbolic significance for the revolutionaries, as the Chairman of the Constitutional Amendment Commission. Morsi accepted the help of the JIM (see page 128) during his Presidency. For example, Mahmoud Mekki, who was elected vice president, was one of the most important personalities in the 2005 protests organized by the judiciary against the Mubarak regime. The president of the Constituent Assembly, Husam al-Giryani, who was in charge of preparing the Constitution, was another leading name in the 2005 uprisings. A referendum was held regarding the constitution and the Judges Club which was dominated by the judges from the Executive Movement, contested the monitoring the referendum. The JIM, on the other hand, announced that it had accepted auditing the referendum (Huseyin, 2012). After the establishment of the first government under the new Constitution, judges from the JIM were appointed to important positions in the Ministry of Justice. For example, the Minister of Justice Ahmed Mekki, his assistants and the Attorney General were all connected to this movement (Abdunnaim, 2012).

The point here is that the continuation of a movement, which for decades sought to protect and promote the independence of the judiciary, either agreed or disagreed with the political authority upon the condition of the independence of the judiciary. This is not an indication that the JIM maintains the same ideology or political opinion as the power holders that strengthen the independence of the judiciary by taking steps to strengthen the judicial guarantees or by establishing the separation of powers. When the group understands that its independence cannot be established, it withdraws its support.

7.2.8 Ebbs and Flows: The Position of External Actors

Since the Mubarak regime had a close relationship with the U.S. as an important ally, a global actor, and the country with which it maintained the most institutional relations, it was necessary to examine the stance adopted by the US after the start of the demonstrations (Brownlee, 2012a; Yegin, 2016).

Egypt is an important country for the US. In Brownlee's words "Egypt has held tremendous strategic value for the US during the Cold War and after" (2012a: 11). Egypt, which is one of the leading countries in the Arab world, has an important role in counter-balancing Iran and radical groups in the region (Brownlee, 2012a: 13, 16). It is in cooperation with Israel and assumes a leading role in negotiations with Palestinian groups, subsequently facilitating the work of both the US and Israel. In addition, it is critical geo-politically in terms of its military strategy. Egypt opens its air space and sea routes, particularly through the Suez Canal, to the US army in its operations targeting the Gulf. This provides the US strategic access to the region (Brownlee, 2012a: 12-14).

The US's close relations with Egypt began in the midst of 1970's and turned into an alliance with an agreement signed in 1979. Following this agreement, the US has been the greatest contributor of foreign assistance to Egypt. Even though American foreign aid to Egypt has continued both in economic and military form for many years, economic aid has declined considerably in the last 10 years. The US has helped to modernize Egypt's arms systems by almost 80 %. For this reason, the military relations between the US and Egypt constitute the most critical aspect of their bilateral relations. Interview data suggests that the US does not want to lose such a vital ally in which it has made such a significant investment. Some scholars such as Brownlee, who has written specifically on the subject of the US's significant material and political investments in Egypt, elaborate the reason behind the US's approach towards Egypt by referring to Carles Boix's theory in which Boix argues that "when elites hold large amounts of immobile assets they oppose democratization for fear of expropriation" (Cited in Brownlee, 2012a: 1).

US officials issued clear messages that they opposed to the violent suppression of the demonstrations (Lynch, 2011) to the Egyptian Chief of Staff who was in DC when

the incidents erupted. Keeping the channels of communication alive opened the floodgates for the social movement. Amid spreading demonstrations in Egypt, the Obama administration called for Mubarak to meet the people's demands and to refrain from cutting off internet and telephone communications. These statements put emphasis on the demands of people, but it is remarkable that they were made to Mubarak himself. As seen here, the US administration initially avoided making a statement directly targeting Mubarak and supported the people in an overt way. This goal of this stance was to avoid losing the sympathy of both sides. It took the various possible results into consideration, refraining from alienating Mubarak in the case he remained in power and keeping the faith of other authoritarian allies who might lose faith in the US due to its stance towards Egypt.

The US was playing in its own interest and waiting to see who would come out on top in order to secure their interests. On the 28th of January, Hillary Clinton made a statement that the Egyptian government was strong and that they would be ok ("US urges", 2011). However, just a few days later they had to change their rhetoric completely. The events during the first week of the uprisings made them realize that the Mubarak regime was a lost cause and this is precisely why they shifted their stance so rapidly and dramatically. In other words, they realized that their partner was not going to be able to deliver anything and he would never have control over the country again. After the Egyptian army took to the streets as a guarantor power, a significant portion of people who were in the streets were not directed by the Muslim Brotherhood unlike what was feared. The US realized that a new Egypt would emerge and that they would be able to maintain their alliance with this new Egypt. In Brownlee's words, the Obama administration "sought a narrow leadership change that would calm the crowds while preserving the US-Egyptian alliance" (2012a: 17). Brownlee (2012a: 19) addressed the Egyptian uprising in three stages with regards to the US approach. According to him, between January 25-28, the US administration considered Mubarak as "capable of surviving the crisis". From January 30 to February 9, the US government then "hoped to shift authority and attention from Mubarak to Suleiman" (Brownlee, 2012a: 19). Finally, after handing over authority to Suleiman on February 10, the "White House supported a soft military coup that removed Mubarak from office, placated protesters and preserved the US-Egyptian alliance" (Brownlee, 2012a: 19).

It is a well-known fact and a well-accepted perception among the Egyptians that the US's position, albeit evolving, was also a factor in determining the outcome of the crisis.[320] The first few days the U.S.'s stance was to favor what they called the stability and the continuation of Mubarak. For B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012), they were pressured to maintain this stance from two sides: the Saudis and the Israelis. Interestingly enough, these two countries were on the same side during the Egyptian uprisings. The Saudis and the Israelis had their own reasons for wishing to keep Mubarak in power. The Saudis did not want a change in the Arab order of the Middle East and the Mubarak regime had close ties with the Israeli state, specifically in the business sector, something that was no secret in Egypt (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

As the protests continued, the Americans began to recognize that the regime was in denial of the severity of the situation. When they saw this denial, the American stance per the conflict began to shift. They began calling for Mubarak to step down. While the U.S. was deciding what to take, they sent Frank Wisner, a former Ambassador to Egypt, to meet Mubarak (Stolberg, 2011). At this point two things happened: while he was there, the Americans seemed to make up their mind that Mubarak needed to step down, resisting continuing pressure from the Israelis and the Saudis. While Washington was taking this stance, Frank Wisner opposing their stance, saying "Mubarak has to stay" (Tomasky, 2011). In B. Korany' words, "he was sugared" (personal communication, December 12, 2012). He was a representative of the American administration sent by the White House to check the situation on the ground. There was an uproar over Washington's two opposing positions. Similar to many cases of bad diplomacy, Wisner later said, "I am talking in a personal capacity" (Jilani, 2011).[321]

[320] This point has been stressed by almost all interviewees.
[321] Then some of the students at AUC began asking why Wisner was saying this. They searched and exposed that he was working with a law firm that had lots of contact with the law firms manned by the old regime. This was a question of conflict of interest. Wisner was on the Board of Trustees at AUC and the students asked that he be removed from the Board of Trustees of the AUC. These are not well known facts, but they are indicative according to B. Korany (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

When the revolts began, the Egyptian Chief of Staff was in Washington. He cancelled his visit to return to Egypt and he remained in constant contact with the Egyptian Army. In B. Korany's words:

> Both the Egyptian Army and Washington realized that it was best for Mubarak to leave. I'm not saying that they coordinated together, but certainly the Army had some implications and the US counted very much on the Egyptian Army. Military relations have been going on for 30 years. People were seeing US and going there very often for training and the sort. The channels were very open between the Egyptian Army and the American administration. I think there is something there to search (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

The US Embassy used the Egyptian army as a source of information about the protests. Access to this information helped the Americans to realize that Mubarak did not have a chance of staying in power. In the end, they reached the same conclusions, even against the pressure of Saudi Arabia and Israel (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012). S. E. Ibrahim, a close witness of the communication between the US and the Egyptian army who was in the US during the uprising, met with Obama and officials from the State Department and White House in Washington DC many times and played an important role in their policy shift. During our interview he stated that:

> During those days when I would go in and out of the White House, I noted that the way they communicated between the two governments was through the Chief of Staff on both sides… Whether the American administration concluded that Obama wanted to pressure or to advise Mubarak, the work was done through the two Chiefs (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

Obama and his administration were directly informed about the realities on the ground by credible people who were known for their opposing stances and thus had the ability to guide US officials. This information accounted for the change in the US stance. For instance, Ibrahim recommended that the American administration not side with Mubarak who had been a loyal ally of the US for thirty years. It was a unique political opportunity for the Egyptian opposition groups to communicate with American decision makers in such a proximity. S. E. Ibrahim was called down to Washington by three of Obama's advisors for consultation. In his words:

> In the situation room [in the National Security Building] there were televisions everywhere and everybody was getting reports and there was a debate. Every few hours Obama would peer into the room and either Biden, O'Hanlon or Clinton would brief him on the assessment of this group. The early question was: Who are those people in Tahrir. Are they Islamists? Are they anti-American and what do they want? Should we stand by Mubarak? Understandably they were very anxious and there was a division among the advisors. I gave them my own opinion (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

In addition to this, screenwriter and film director Mohammed Diab created online promotional videos for el-Baradei when the television channels refused to air Baradei's views (Rashad, 2012: 6). These cases show us that the opposition components succeeded in selling their demands by making use of alternative channels of communication.

7.3 Revolution as "A Project of Civilization"

The youth components that instigated the Egyptian uprisings succeeded in mobilizing potential allies in a short period of time (Shehata, 2012: 105-124). Shehata argues that "youth led movements such as Youth for Change, Tadamon, the April 6th Movement, the el-Baradei campaign and *We Are All Khaled Said* played an important role in involving a new generation of Egyptians into politics" (2012: 105). Nabel Abdel Fettah describes those confronting the regime as:

> The sons and daughters of virtual activism – a new generation that has finally found something around which they can unite and rally. They are the product of a government that has never offered them any ideological vision to believe in, and now they have themselves become a symbol of contemporary Egypt (cited in Shenker, 2011)

They achieved a resonance between different factions of society, forming a strong social movement. In Ghobashy's words "the uprising was effective because of its national reach, synchronizing the entire country in revolution" (2011a). In this process, there emerged many opportunities before the protestors, partly due to the 'liminality' in which the regime was operating. The protestors succeeded in

recognizing these opportunities and profiting from them. Different sections of society were able to put large pressure on the regime with the participation of the masses (Bishara, 2012). In particular, the media's second-by-second broadcast of developments facilitated international support for the opposition. In short, we saw an increase in the opposition's self-confidence over time. Conversely, in just two weeks we also saw the marked decrease in the over-confidence of the regime. The fact that the army did not stand behind Mubarak made different components of the state and the society believe that Mubarak would step down and this ruined the self-confidence of the pro-regime components to a great extent and ultimately caused President Hosni Mubarak who had ruled Egypt with an iron fist since 1980 to step down. As a 'state' institution which was not very politicized and whose institutionalism and professionalism was above average, the national army decided in coordination with the US that Mubarak should step down. This shows that the uprisings were successful in achieving their goal of overthrowing Mubarak. In essence, the arrogance of the power and their overconfidence are the main reasons why Mubarak was forced to step down. Both the interview data and scholarly works confirm that the Egyptian military in partnership with the US, "reactively" accepted a leadership change that preserved the regime rather than "proactively pushing for it" (Brownlee, 2012a: 18).

In summary, Mubarak's first speech[322], the retreat of the police from the streets and their overall dysfunctionality, the army's choice to side with society, the West's withdrawal of support from Mubarak, and the positive role assumed by the media (Lindsey, 2012: 53-63) all served as 'political opportunity structures' during the Egyptian uprising. The ability of the opposition to increase its number of supporters day by day and attract potential allies proves that the framing utilized by the opposition resonated with many. Additionally, the arguments put forward by the regime were ineffective. However, all in all, what had happened during the 18 days reveals that the revolution "did not happen because Egyptians willed it into being. It happened because there was a sudden change in the balance of resources between the rulers and ruled" (el-Ghobashy, 2011b: 3).

[322] Mubarak made three speeches during the uprisings. However, there was almost no reference to these speeches except the first one during the interviews.

The interviews that have been conducted for this thesis indicate that debates with regards to the attitude of the MB and the Salafists, especially their attitudes with regards to the revolution, and the position of the army, are the most hotly debated topics in the discussion about the Egyptian Revolution. In this regard, certain experts believe that the MB did not take a side during the revolution. They did not take to the streets on January 25th when called upon by the protestors to do so and only decided to join the protests when they were certain it would succeed on January 28th (S. E. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 12, 2012). However retired General A. Soliman (personal communication, December 23, 2012) explained the situation in the following manner:

> Due to certain sensitivities the MB was actually present in the field, albeit unofficially, since the beginning of the revolution… Firstly they were being watched by the regime. Secondly they didn't want to incite certain worries that others may hold by giving an Islamic tone to the protests.

Speaking on the same matter M. Imara (personal communication, January 2, 2013) says,

> The MB was already there (in the squares), not with its leaders but with its youth. Had the MB taken to the streets under its own identity the state would have immediately responded and that would have been the end of the story[323]… The day they started taking to the streets in large numbers, January 28, is also the day that stirred up the revolution during the Battle of Camels (the day pro-Mubarak individuals attacked the protestors in Tahrir with camels).

Beyond the debate regarding exactly when the MB joined the process, the dominant view in Egypt during the 18 days of protests was that this was a people's revolution where all the components of Egyptian society had joined the revolution together with the support of state institutions (Aly, 2012: 34; T. al-Bishry, personal

[323] N. Mostafa (personal communication, December 19, 2012) reminded me of the demonstrations organized by MB in 2005. She stated that "in May 2005 just before the amendment of the constitution MB asked for demonstrations all over Egypt. You suddenly found more than millions in the streets. This was a message to the system that we are so strong. But the MB never made or never could make a decision to start revolution alone. Because most would relate it to the army as an Ikhwan revolution. Egyptian people would not go".

communication, January 2, 2013; A. Musa, personal communication, January 2, 2013; Mustafa, 2011). N. Mustafa (2011) describes this revolution as a project of civilization. Egypt had created a Tahrir Square that was able to bring together Islamists, liberals, Copts and the Muslim youth (M. Imara, personal communication, January 2, 2013). One can also observe that Egypt acted as a whole to a large extent during the revolution. Therefore, the revolution is neither a MB revolution, nor is the MB the sole actor of the revolution. The Egyptian people displayed historic solidarity, revolting against their country's dictator and achieving an unexpected[324] success by overcoming the difficulties of collective action (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013; M. Imara, personal communication, January 2, 2013). In Shehata's words "unlike the opposition, "the regime suffered from multiple divisions during the crisis" (Shehata, 2011).

[324] Unexpected, because even the founders of the movements did not expect such a huge success: Personal communications with T. al-Khouli, G. Ishak, A. Shubaky and A. Zehran.

CHAPTER VIII

WALKING ON A MINEFIELD: PUSHING FOR CHANGE IN SYRIA[325]

8.1 Introduction

In parallel to the particularities commonly witnessed in many autocracies in the Middle East, a general state of injustice and inequality have also ruled in Syria. The people in Syria have long suffered from the high cost of living, disruptions in the provision of social services, unemployment, corruption and the abuse of authority by security forces. Additionally, with the consequences of oppressing the opposition, religious extremism, repressed minorities, and sectarianism, Syria received its fair share of problems from the region's recent developments. Syria too was not immune to the problems that affected the region, forcing the people of the region to live in hardship. The events that have been taking place since the beginning of 2011 prove this (Lesch, 2012b). The hesitant first steps taken by the Tunisian people at the beginning of the uprisings evolved in the case of Syria into a determined stand which was undaunted despite all the counter-measures against it. Although the Syrian civil war caused the deaths of more than 400.000 people, the Syrians transcended the wall

[325] This chapter has been enriched with interviews conducted with Syrian opinion leaders, activists and dissidents. Discussions held during my visits abroad with experts, diplomats, academics and activists and discussions held during visits made by foreign diplomats, experts, activists and academics to USAK, where I used to works as a researcher, have played a role in shaping the arguments made in this chapter. In preparing this part of the dissertation, many workshops were held with the participation of many academics, activists, politicians, and journalists from Syria, Jordan, Europe, America and Turkey, and interviews were conducted with most of these participants. In addition, between January-February 2013, more than 50 face to face interviews were conducted with the Syrians who live in towns and camps on Turkey's Syrian border. A survey was also carried out with the participation of more than 400 refugees.

of fear and set their country on a path from which there is no return (M. Sarmini, personal communication, October 27, 2011).

8.1.1 General Patterns in the Syrian Crisis

In line with Turner's prediction, Syria went into a crisis situation when the initial unrest began to unfold. During this crisis phase, depending on dynamics (redressive action) between those involved, the stances adopted by the parties led to an environment in which violence prevailed. In Turner's words, "unless there are dispute resolution mechanisms that are recognized as legitimate by the parties, the scope and the intensity of the conflict escalate and the initial conflict becomes a crisis" (cited in Ross, 2001: 167). Within the Syrian crisis, the violence (authoritarian approach) that made its presence felt from the very beginning of the uprisings has led to a vicious circle of redressive action and crisis (Lynch, 2014: 2). Thousands of people have died in this process and tens of thousands are missing, with international actors thus far unable to present a convincingly decisive attitude on the matter. It would be convenient to first note that such an atmosphere and the regime's standpoint which is supported with international protection have created a larger space within which the Syrian regime can maneuver.[326]

Throughout the conflict, many cities have been the scenes of battle, with civilians continually being slaughtered. According to numbers provided by human rights organizations, around 400,000 people have lost their lives in the conflict ("Aded al-Shuhada," n.d.). However, the Syrian people report far higher numbers, purportedly bordering 600,000.[327] Interview data suggests that one of the regime's goals has been to "disturb social harmony" (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013) by "murdering civilians in large numbers" (A. Sakallı, personal conversation, February 18, 2013). Reports from human rights organizations indicate the bloody consequences of these atrocities (Human Right Watch, 2011, June 1; Human Rights Watch, 2011, November 11). The massacres have, thus far, left hundred-thousands of

[326] Interview data suggests that the many risks that are associated with possible intervention in Syria give the Ba'ath regime room to maneuver. Ba'ath officials are allowed to believe that due to the many risks, the international community is not acting in unison and will therefore not intervene against them. This encourages the violence of the regime.
[327] According to the informal interviews conducted in the field, the figures are at least twice of the official figures.

Syrians injured, over 5 million seeking refuge (Dinçer et al, 2013) in countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan and 150 thousand people in detention. As a result of the civil war, many cities in Syria have been completely destroyed (Human Rights Watch, 2013)[328], even important World Heritage Sites (Fisk, 2015). Furthermore according to information drawn from local sources, there are claims that public buildings such as hospitals, schools, sports centers and large storage facilities are used to hide, torture and murder detainees (Human Rights Watch, 2012). In light of this information, it is clear that the regime has committed many crimes against humanity (Borger & Beaumont, 2012). It should also be noted that one of the reasons of radicalization is the deliberate targeting by the regime of the moderate democratic leaders of the opposition movements. As B. Kodmani (personal communication, November 13, 2014) noted "they were thrown in prison or assassinated, and this forced most of the remaining democratic figures to flee the country. This left the democratic movement with very few figures still able to lead it and uphold the same values to continue guiding the movement on the ground". Even though various forces from the opposition continued the struggle, the lack of action to stop what was happening, despite the fact that it occurred before the world's eyes, negatively affected the opposition's motivation and its chance of success in the field. Thus, there has been an increasing tendency among the opposition to think, "We will solve our own problems, and don't meddle in our business" (Members of the Syrian Free Judges and Prosecutors, personal communication, October 23, 2013). A young activist, who is angry with the international actors that support the Syrian regime or remain silent, states the following, which is of significance in the sense of providing a look into opposition sentiments:

> We challenge everybody. As long as you support this regime, we will be struggling to eradicate it. Oh Allah, who do we have with us other than you? We demand no one's help and no international support. We will take down this regime with no help but the help and grace of Allah (personal communication, January 31, 2013).

[328] One of the most used words in the interviews conducted was *qusife (collapsed).*

This situation has implicitly provided opportunities for different radical actors to make gains in the field (Jabha al-Nusrah, Ahrar al-Sham, Daesh, etc.)[329], which have brought a multitude of problems with it and paved the way for further radicalization (O'Bagy, 2012). This conflict is far from being solved, and has transformed into an all-out civil war. A point of no return was crossed and we face a vicious circle: the need to continue fighting against the regime led foreign countries to support the most effective groups on the ground and these were the more radical and Islamist-oriented groups. The more they received support, the more effective they became and the weaker the democratic groups became (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014). At this point in time where it became a civil war, an incurable and irreparable breach occurred in Syria, solidifying the schism between the opposition and the state.[330] In S. al-Taqi's words "there is no way for a zero sum game, there will be no winner in Syria" (personal communication, April 24, 2013).

In addition to various regional and international pro-regime players, including both state and non-state actors, Syria is now a battle ground for foreign fighters coming from all over the World (Byman & Shapiro, 2014).[331] In the words of A. al-Bash, "there is no clear winner on the horizon nor is it clear what the result will be" (personal communication, February 21, 2013). According to B. Ghailoun's analysis, "it is highly likely that the situation in Syria will lead to a long term war of attrition" (personal communication, November 23, 2014), in which Daesh will play a role unless the rise of extremist forces is brought to a halt at the expense of democratic forces in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and other Arab countries and an international common understanding is achieved. According to A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013) who was the Secretary General of the Arab League for many years, "the situation has come too far that going back to where Syria was couple of years ago is impossible"

[329] Of course there are several other radical groups operating inside Syria. I refer just to the most well-known actors.
[330] As noted in the literature "schisms follow challenges and rebellions and arise when crises are extensive and the redress is overly harsh" (McFarland, 2004: 1292).
[331] Their numbers are estimated to be between 15,000 and 20,000.

8.1.2 Being a captive of discourse on terrorism

Developments in Tunisia and Egypt revived the hopes of the Syrian people, providing them an opportunity they had been hoping for years, particularly since the 1980's (Leenders & Heydemann, 2012). Interview data suggests that these hopes continued to survive for some time following the start of 'Arab Spring' even when the events began to affect Syria.

The passage of time since the first uprising has seen a transformation in the discourses employed, such as 'democratic transformation', 'human rights' and 'peaceful protests' to concepts such as 'terror', 'radical groups', 'Nusrah', 'al-Qaeda' and 'Daesh'. It is possible to detect the change that occurred in the conflict by looking at what words were employed. While the debates were around the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the moderate opposition until the middle of 2012, for instance, nowadays when the discussion turns to Syria, most people are discussing the radical elements involved in the conflict. It is possible to observe these changes not only in discourses of external actors, but in those of the Syrians as well.[332] While on the one hand radical opposition groups have come, to a great extent, be associated with religious components, on the other hand, it has also paved the way for the association of Islamic sects with radicalism.

8.1.3 Revolution vs. counter-revolution

Even though the regime and its supporters constantly accused terrorists of trying to bring down the state with the help of external powers, in the beginning this claim neither gained acceptance nor reflected reality as much as it does now. However, the past four years clearly demonstrated that counter-revolution components were both powerful and successful in achieving their goals (Lynch, 2014: 2). In Syria, radical groups increased in both numbers and effectiveness over time. It is clear that the 'Arab Spring' as a whole turned into a process that worked in the favor of authoritarian regimes that fed on the status quo (Kamrava, 2012). This was supported by the shift in how people began to view Bashar al-Assad, as the 'lesser of two evils'

[332] There are serious differences between the discourses in the interviews conducted in the 2011-2012 period and those in the interviews conducted in the 2013-2015 period with different Syrians. Whereas in the first period, no one discussed the different risks and potential of terror, in the second period even the most ardent opposition members had been wooed by terrorist rhetoric.

when compared to the terror groups (RT America, 2015).[333] In this process, when Daesh emerged and quickly got stronger, the opposition forces became more and more divided. It should also be noted that money flowing from external actors facilitated the 'balkanization' of the opposition forces over time. Interview data suggests that from the very beginning the regime worked to distract the revolution from its aims and distort its image by facilitating the creation of terrorist groups. The regime succeeded in leaving the world with two unattractive choices: the Assad regime or Daesh. The Damascus administration hoped that the international community would opt for the regime as the 'lesser of two evils' and in B. Ghailoun's words "the regime really succeeded to a large extent, not because it was the better choice in this gamble but on the contrary because it was able to distort the revolution and make the international community fall into doubt regarding the real aims of the revolution" (personal communication, November 23, 2014).

Indeed, the realization of the claims of the regime concerning the links between that uprisings and al-Qaeda, which were ungrounded at the beginning, came to strengthen the hands of those who espoused such claims like Iran, Russia and the regime itself. Moreover, it is also fair to say that the collapse of hope for change in Syria made certain Gulf Sheikhs very happy, in particular the Saudis, who did not want the wave of unrest to expand (Widen, 2011). In Lynch's words "a counter-revolution led by Saudi Arabia and the monarchies of the GCC has, at least temporarily, blocked further change" (Lynch, 2014: 2). This was also made evident by the contrasting stances of Saudis in Syria and Egypt. While Saudis financed groups which radicalized the conflict in Syria, they simultaneously lent support for President Sisi in Egypt. (Lippman, 2013). The escalation in violence and sectarian tension and the alienation of sincere actors of change facilitated the work of the regime who pushed for the continuity of the status quo. That's to say, there was a simultaneous learning process for the counterrevolutionary forces (Heydemann & Leenders, 2014). On the other hand, from the perspective of local components, the survival of the Assad regime as a predictable enemy and the emergence of a divided or weakened Syria can be regarded as positive development for Israel.[334] It is possible to say that there

[333] For instance, S. Mulder of the University of Texas at Austin argues that ISIS' destruction of Syrian culture cannot compare to that destroyed by Assad regime.
[334] Personal communications with many Syrians in Amman, particularly members of Islamist groups.

exists such a perception in the field. It is common to encounter such statements from Syrian civilians in the field who believe that there is an American-Israili plot in Syria. According to these claims, the goal of these two states, as in Iraq, is to stretch out the crisis in Syria for a long period of time so that Syria becomes a failed state, totally destroying its infrastructure, economy and social culture (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013; Bakeer, 2013).

For this reason, it is fair to claim that together with Assad regime, Daesh and similar groups facilitated the collapse of the revolution attempt, contributed to the legitimacy of counter-revolution forces and rendered the opposition illegitimate by radicalizing many of their elements, solidifying the schism formed during the Syrian conflict.

While the Egyptian uprising took only 18 days, Syria's conflict has been a much more drawn out process. Due to the length of the Syrian conflict, it is impossible to apply the same methodology used when analyzing the crisis in Egypt in order to explain the events in Syrian drama. Therefore, the interaction between Syrian parties will be treated in a broader perspective throughout this chapter. The situation in Syria has become a stalemate, with no developments towards a solution for the last four years. Rather, the problems faced by the parties involved remain the same. For this reason, what has been happening in Syria necessitates a careful, objective and thorough reading.[335] Here it should be underlined that in order to form a comprehensive and healthy roadmap for addressing the Syrian issue, the developments in Syria must be correctly interpreted and closely monitored. Holding to this, this study has closely monitored events in Syria since 2011 (Dinçer et al, 2013; Dinçer, 2015; Dinçer & Coşkun, 2011a, 2011b; Dincer & Topal, 2014).[336]

When compared to Egypt, Syria is experiencing a much longer resolution process. It therefore makes more sense to evaluate the general tendencies and strategies in the conflict rather than the daily or monthly coverage of incidents. It is also necessary to understand the dynamics that led to the break between the opposition and the regime (schism). This chapter will try to present the various perceptions gathered in the

[335] The situation in Syria is discussed in the light of information received from the local sources.
[336] The Syrian drama has been closely monitored by the means of both this study and different projects.

interviews held with Syrian opposition elites. The goal of this chapter is to analyze how people understand the events that led up to the current situation in Syria. The chapter is concerned specifically with the popular perception since it is these people who have the power to mobilize others and shift international favor towards the opposition.[337] The data compiled from the interviews suggests that it is necessary to focus on five closely related issues in order to understand how the situation came to this point: 1) the battle to control perceptions 2) the loyalty of the army and security bureaucracy to the regime, their coherence, coercion, and thus hard-to-break core elite alliance 3) the stances of international actors 4) the weaknesses of the opposition, and 5) the disappointment, desperation and radicalization resulting from the protracted conflict.

It should be noted that in terms of the strategy and discourse employed by the regime, the most emphasis was put on the *Wall Street Journal*'s interview with Bashar al-Assad before the crisis unfolded, which was interpreted as "a complete denial of the possibility of any reform in Syria" (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013) and the first speech following the uprisings he made on March 30, 2011 which created "an ultimate disappointment for the people" ("Interview with Syrian", 2011; "Speech to the Syrian", 2011; Cflit.net Videos, 2011). This chapter will concentrate on these two contents (WSJ interview and his first speech) while simultaneously analyzing the regime's discourse. During the period that followed the first speech, Assad and his supporters made a lot of statements and held many interviews. However due to the fact that their statements and interviews did not vary notably from the above-stated interview and speech, and because the same interview and speech constituted a basis for shaping the perception of people, other speeches and statements will not be referenced unless needed ("President Bashar Al-Assad," n.d.). [338]

[337] In this study, over 30 Syrian elites were interviewed, such as B. Ghalioun, B. Kodmani, S. Kawakibi, H. Ghadban, Y. Ghadban, and S. al-Taqi.
[338] All the interviews and speeches of Bashar al-Assad are available on his own web site both in Arabic and English.

8.2 'Self-Confident and Non-Hesitant' Regime vs. 'Non-Assertive, Atomized and Isolated' People

Although the uprising in Syria only began to attract the world's attention on March 15, 2011, it can be said that the people began to attempt to mobilize in February 2011 through calls for an uprising on *Facebook*.[339] According to the call posted on the Facebook page, "Syrian Revolution of 2011," the civil unrest would begin in all cities after the Friday prayer on February 4 and on Saturday, February 5. Bashar al-Assad's potential response was a matter of discussion at the time as he was well known in those days for his cruelty and intolerance. Many commentators and analysts commented that Assad would immediately suppress the uprisings (Abu Khalil, 2013). Indeed, "the brutality of the response to the uprising conveyed the message that raising the level of political participation or respect for the basic rights of people was simply out of the question" (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Just a week before the agreed date for the "Day of Rage" on February 5, Bashar al-Assad made a statement that such uprisings would not happen in Syria and that no gap existed between the people and the regime ("Interview with Syrian", 2011).[340] According to him, the Syrian people would not rebel because he had won back their favor with his anti-American stance and incongruity with Israel, which is accurate to certain extent ("Interview with Syrian", 2011). As stated in Chapter V, we see that one of the most utilized arguments to control the people's perception was the reference to the ongoing discursive conflict with Israel. Interview data points out that the so-called conflict with Israel has been one of the main arguments used to justify the state of emergency in the country from 1963 to 2011. However, the resistance of the people obliged to live under these emergency conditions for the past 48 years against these governments has gained momentum with the 'Arab Spring' which can be considered a 'political opportunity structure' for the Syrian people. In this respect, M. Barmu (personal communication, January 5, 2013) states that:

> Certainly, the tsunami of the Arab Spring also affected Syria. The fall of the totalitarian regimes in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt prompted people to act. In my

[339] Personal communications with many young political activists.
[340] He said that "If you want to talk about Tunisia and Egypt, we are outside of this. At the end we are not Tunisians and we are not Egyptians".

> opinion, people regarded this as an opportunity to get rid of tyranny. There developed a conviction among Syrian people that this was perhaps the one and only opportunity for liberation.[341] The international and global atmosphere, particularly the one in the Arab region, seemed to favor them in order to be freed from the regime.

In the meantime, contrary to previous expectations of the organizers, when February 5th arrived, the calls via social media to fight against corruption and tyranny were unrewarded (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013). The support of approximately 10,000 fans for the Facebook page was not reflected by the numbers on the streets. Some even believed that these calls were made by Israeli saboteurs.[342] In Damascus, there was almost nobody in the streets around the parliament building for a couple weeks, except for undercover cops and journalists whose numbers were increasing day by day (Abdulhamid, 2011). It seemed that the people had been successfully intimidated even before taking to the streets. In that regard, H. Hashemete (personal communication, April 24, 2013) argues that:

> At the beginning of the revolution, when a hundred protesters went into streets, these people did this to be martyred. You mention scare, this is a fifty year-old scary movie. The Assad regime is the bloodiest and most oppressive regime in the history of Damascus, and cannot even be compared to either era of the Mongols, the Crusaders or the Holocaust.

In the aftermath of the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak in Tunisia and Egypt, respectively, Assad feared a mirroring of these revolts in his country, and made certain attempts to stem the violence before it began. He implemented a $250 million welfare plan for 420,000 poor families in order to prevent possible uprisings, since 30 % of population lived under poverty line (Sands, 2011). The president also promised broader rights for nongovernmental organizations and a renewal of the

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[341] In line with this point, for Pearlman (2013: 389), people in countries like Syria and Libya "advocated revolution not out of erroneous forecasting, but out of hope".

[342] It does not make sense to argue that some of the actors who did not want the regime to change did not take steps to provide the basis for conspiracies or broadcast false reports. For example, thinking that actors like Israel were successful at managing public perception in order to prevent uprisings as a project of the West, reveals that the truth cannot be evaluated in a strategic way for geopolitics of the region. Indeed, for an FSA commander (personal communication, January 31, 2013), it is clear that "such manipulative efforts mean support for the Assad regime. While thinking that Israel wants Assad's regime to go can be regarded as an academically naive approach to the event".

media law ("Government Announces", 2011; "Assad's reform", 2012). However, interview data suggests that, at the time of his reform promises, Assad had already begun to lose his legitimacy in the eyes of public.

Riots, which grew in March 2011, literally began in the city of Dera'a near the Jordanian border, which had a population of 100,000 (Leenders, 2012).[343] Problems erupted in the wake of the imprisonment of a group of young people who were accused of drawn graffiti criticizing the local government and corruption. Events began when Atif Najib, Syrian Political Chief of Police and son of Bashar al-Assad's aunt, addressed Dera'a's delegation of nobles who came to him asking for the release of their kids: "Forget these children. Leave and go make new children. If you are not able, send me your wives."[344] Interview data suggests that such an insult to their dignity and honor by a government official and even not giving an exact punishment to him by Assad was enough to lead people to revolt (Bates & Rassam, 2002).[345] In regards to this attitude of the Chief of Police one of the sheikhs from the al-Sade tribe said, "it is certain that this creates great problems in the Arab societies when you insult somebody in this way" (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). Then, unsurprisingly, people gathered at the al-Omeri Mosque in protest (Abouzeid, 2011). The first protest took place after Friday prayer with the participation of Sheikh Ahmad Siyasanah[346] and protestors demanded the release of the children. At this point in time, the goal of the protest was not to overthrow the regime. Yet, whatever the aims of the protests were, the statements made by Atif Najib sufficed to mobilize the people of Dera'a (Abuzeid, 2011; Attia, 2011). Despite its small scale, this can be said to have created a 'political opportunity structure' (Leenders, 2012; Leenders & Heydemann, 2012: 140).[347]

Following the initial protests, Dera'a was surrounded by soldiers and the city was cut off from the rest of the country, including their communication lines and electricity.

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[343] For a comprehensive account on why and how the case of Dera'a was important in terms of Syrian uprisings see Leenders (2012).
[344] This is the widely accepted story of what happened in Dera'a. The same story was presented in every single interview.
[345] Honor (dignity) is one of the keywords in tribal societies.
[346] He is the Imam of Dara'a's Omari Mosque. For the whole story of his struggle with the regime and several of his speeches see ("Free Halab," n.d.).
[347] Leenders and Heydemann (2012) make a special reference to Dara'a in terms of collective action and mass mobilization.

However, even these measures by the government could not prevent the spread of the protests to the other cities in Syria (Leenders & Heydemann, 2012: 149-151; "Syria Timeline," 2012). Thus, we see that the incidents in Dera'a created another 'political opportunity structure' in the name of the Syrian people overcoming their threshold of fear and mobilizing themselves (Lynch, 2012: 2; Leenders, 2012). The statements of A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) support this:

> We can say that if these incidents had not occurred in Dera'a, the revolution would not have taken off. Yes, it may not have started and thus may not have jumped to other regions. Sentiment on the ground prepare the people to start a revolution, but there had not been a direct catalyst to spark a revolution. It was the Dera'a incidents that caused it. The environment and society were ready, in particular after what happened in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Although Assad, like the other leaders of the region, promised to end the state of emergency and to grant citizenship for Kurdish people ("Al-Rais Assad", 2001), at the same time he ordered the security forces to respond harshly to the opposition. In other words, even at the beginning Assad expressed that he would support reform, but it was not put into action. On the contrary, interview data suggests that the regime decided to solve the crisis with increased security measures which saw peaceful protestors detained and killed.[348]

In addition, it should be noted that the majority of the Syrian people were hoping for positive steps to end the uprisings and at the same time were frightened of Assad until he gave his first speech on March 30, 2011 after the uprisings began (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). Interview data suggests that public opinion, up until the riots, was that Bashar al-Assad was actually a proponent of change and reform and that it was the system that was preventing reform. Moreover, after the first waves of protests, there was also an expectation that Bashar al-Assad would make a speech supporting the people and reform. He delivered his first speech on March 30, 2011 to the parliament. M. Barmu (personal communication, January 5, 2013), who describes the atmosphere of that day, states the following:

[348] This was another common point stressed in the interviews.

> I myself was there when he came to make his first speech in the parliament. Beforehand, the following rumor spread among the MP in the parliament: Bashar would make a historical speech today. Syria would shift to a new stage, the constitution's Article 8 on the ruling party would be abrogated, he would talk about a new electoral law, and the like.

However, the speech took an unexpected turn. According to M. Barmu, the aim was to draw in MPs, to prevent people from disappearing and generate a large crowd to address. Yet, Bashar, again in M. Barmu's words, "arrogantly mocked the flowing blood of Syria and its martyrs, saying that there would be war, if war was what they really wanted" (personal communication, January 5, 2013; also see TheArashhak, 2011). Contrary to original expectations, Assad disappointed the people with his March 30th speech and it was after this date that he began to lose popular support dramatically (Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 42). Interview data suggests that this disappointment mobilized different segments of society. Those who had been waiting for years wondering 'whether there could be a change or not' came to the understanding that Bashar would not do anything and believed that it would be better to take action. In this sense, this disappointment can be said to have served as a 'political opportunity structure' which enhanced the ability of the people to mobilize. This speech, "in which he deprecated popular grievances, disillusioned the many who wanted him to use the crisis to advance reform" (Hinnebusch, 2012: 106). After this date, the number of protests and the level of repression increased and, accordingly, so did the number of Syrians refugees crossing the borders (Güçer et al, 2013: 35).

One of the major faults of the leaders during the public revolts was their tardiness in responding to the people's demands. Leaders waited to make speeches and promise reforms after many days of revolt and their promises could barely respond to the previous demands of the society, which had by that time run out of patience. Many of my respondents asked the following question during the interviews: "The constitution was changed after seven months. But what was standard? You can say that these were legitimate demands from the society as they were trying to change the constitution. But then what was the reason for this seven-month delay?" Interview data suggests that if Bashar al-Assad were able to make such an

intervention without delay in terms of realizing the reforms, the situation in Syria could have been very different, given Assad's level of popular support. Some Syrians believed that Bashar al-Assad had gained the support of close to 70% of the people before the protests (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

For many of my interviewees, the regime was never serious and honest about solving the problems. The general conviction was that if they had been honest and met the demands of society, this crisis could have been avoided and billions of dollars saved. For instance A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013), a former member of parliament argues that:

> If he had spent half of his strength on reform, the people would have consented Bashar's leadership. Bashar was not an antipathic man. If he had made real reforms, had given people their rights, and had spent a little from the money and the men he had been continuously accumulating, he would have remained in power.

Assad, however, began to violently suppress uprisers from the first day. Indeed, from a different point of view, Assad, when compared to other Arab leaders, had more advantages in terms of his reform minded image. At this point, S. al-Taqi (personal communication, April 24, 2013) makes an important point:

> Bashar sent one of his closest friends three times to ask how to respond to the uprisings. I said if he accepts to get on a plane and go to Tahrir Square and say "This is my revolution" and go back to Umayyed Square in Damascus and say "I want genuine reform to get rid of the deep state and I want you to support me in doing this", he would have had 5 million people in the streets supporting him and he would have become another Gamal Abdul Nasser.

However, it was too late when Assad finally began to speak and he apparently had no intention of stepping back. It would be wrong to claim in the eleventh hour that there was still time to increase civil servant salaries, followed by the resignation of the government, the abolition of the Emergency Law or the conferring of citizenship on the Kurds as violence had already taken off. The public perception at the time was that Assad's promises were essentially aimed at external actors. Moreover, since his accession to power, the society had never heard Assad talk or hint of any opposition

against the Ba'ath party, whose history is full of atrocities. The people had run out of patience with Assad, since he did nothing but built the impression that he wanted but was not capable of realizing democratic reforms imposed by changing conjuncture (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). Indeed, interview data suggests that Assad had been using the reform discourse in order to gain time and prevent future revolts, while arresting and massacring the youth. This answers the question "Why did he wait so long to make such a speech?" For many of my informants living in Turkey, the regime was trying to smooth over public opinion and delay a possible intervention. Meanwhile, the regime elements were eradicating the young and hopeful minds so as to prevent the people from awakening and organizing in the future.[349]

The regime and its supporters skillfully employ propaganda tools to cast millions of Syrians as terrorists and criminals while the people on the streets have been suffering the disappointment of not finding the support they had originally sought. As a matter of fact, it is clear that Syrians have become wary of all actors claiming to side with them, including Turkey. They feel instead that everyone has conspired against them. As S. al-Taqi (personal communication, April 24, 2013) says, "The main lesson in Syria is that we learned to never trust the international community".

In short, interview data suggests that Bashar Assad was concentrating on three points when the 'revolution' was taking off in Syria. 1) Assuming an arrogant position against this opposition 2) Ignoring what was happening and the demands of people, 3) Trying to buy time by resorting to coercion while acting slowly to enact reforms. In the words of B. Barmu (personal communication, January 5, 2013), "Arrogance merged with stupidity, and unified with ignorance and slowness". If to put it exactly, as B. Ghaiolun (personal communication, November 23, 2014) states "alienation of the revolution was aimed".

It seems that the regime in Syria clearly knows what to do and does not miss a beat, and so does not have any difficulty in explaining its reasoning and convincing other local, regional, and global actors to support itself. Conversely, the opposition

[349] Informal interviews with Syrians in Kilis, Akçakale and Reyhanlı.

movement was unable to reach the level of self-confidence needed to be successful and was therefore unable to convince others of their power since it could not get the support it demanded, rendering the movement weak in terms of the dimensions of its perception. In other words, as Pierret describes, while "the regime has an address, a leader, is unified and has a clear pattern of action, that is, mass killing and destruction", the opposition is very fragmented ranging from "exiled proponents of non-violence to local civilian committees" to "mainstream Islamists like the MB", from "mainstream armed groups like the FSA" to "radical Salafi Jihadists" (Abu Khalil, 2013).

8.3 War of Perceptions in Syria

Framing is a very influential tool which eases creating the "necessary resonance to transform individual subjectivity into shared inter-subjectivity" and in other words transforming "dispersed, disgruntled individuals into an organized protest movement, with shared objectives and even a shared identity" (Korany & el-Mahdi, 2012: 12). Accordingly, civil society, or the opposition in these cases redefined. On the other hand authorities also "employ framing strategies in response to resistance" since "it enables them to revitalize tasks or at least preserve their control over the situation" (McFarland, 2004: 1276). In other words, counter-framing strategies performed by the authorities aim to reverse the process embarked by the challengers. In any case, "frameworks of interaction are interpretive modes of action whose definition is anchored in particular activities, roles relationships, forms and contents of communication and status conceptions" (McFarland, 2004: 1259). It might be considered as a canon in farming approach that every type of 'frame alignment' strategy came across with an opposite form of 'frame contestation' (McFarland, 2004).

One of the most common strategies for counter-framing is to change the basis for discussion on which you are unjust, in order to try to put it in a new turn. It is even easy to come across such an attitude in daily life. One utilizes a perception management strategy depending on how s/he would like something to be perceived. When you look at the broader picture, you use media, diplomatic tools and various instruments based on your abilities in order to formulate a perception in your favor. From a Foucauldian point of view, the party with the most relative power ultimately

succeeds in shaping the popular perception. Moreover, a discourse which is initially created as a kind of virtual reality may eventually have the potential to become a reality in time. At this point, your relevant capacity determines whether or not the virtual reality would become an actual one. From herein, the basic variables are about the dynamics of alliances between the elites and how such dynamics are preserved, how you make up for and introduce emerging weaknesses, and which strategies are used in order to obtain the support of, or at least to confuse the institutional third parties inside and outside the country. Unlike Egypt, the Syrian 'revolution' has occurred over a much longer period of time. Interview data suggests that the events in Syria were essentially propaganda, a war on managing perceptions. It might be argued that as a result of the strategy applied by Assad and the Syrian regime, Syrian opposition groups have thus far been unable to unseat Assad. Indeed, as will be explained below, virtual realities turned into actual realities over time. Even if he leaves tomorrow, Assad's survival up until now is more than enough proof of his success and the failure of the opposition movement seeking change in Syria.

8.3.1 Conflicting Frames

Master frames that are articulated in the framing literature are the generic frames that are available in a given society and emphasize certain aspects of social reality (Snow & Benford, 1988: 200). For Snow and Benford (1988: 200), "the potency of a master frame will also vary with the extent to which it is relevant to or resonates with the realities of adherents and constituents as well as bystanders. Hypothetically, the greater the resonance, the more potent the master frame". Interview data and participant observation suggest that at the very beginning of the uprisings, Assad and the Ba'ath party aimed at creating a fake reality through manipulation and black propaganda, by distorting the frame of reasonable public requests (Lundgren-Jörum, 2012).[350] However, the issue had always been a question of freedoms, democracy and human rights; and once it is about human rights, it no longer concerns a single group (Attia, 2011). Yet, at the end of the day, challengers failed to turn

[350] For a comparison of the conflicting frames of the regime and the opposition in the early stages of the revolt see Lundgren-Jörum (2012). This article puts forward that, whereas the regime was stressing that Syria was the victim of a foreign conspiracy, the opposition was arguing that the uprising was a domestic affair initiated by Syrians.

developments into opportunities. To state it more clearly, the development of possible opportunities were blocked (Leenders & Heydemann, 2012). Now no one thinks that those who ask for change are pro-democratic or peaceful.

8.3.1.1 Master Frame of the Challengers

Interview data suggests that the Syrian people rebelled against the present regime in order to feel as free individuals in their society, just as in other countries.[351] The basic objective was to express themselves and to ensure the elimination of abuses by the regime. In this regard, the governing elite in Syria were overpowering and present everywhere in Syrian social life. Therefore, the regime became similar to its counterparts in other countries in the region. Further, Syria exceeded many Middle East countries in terms of oppression and restrictions. It is a country which has not made room for true political parties, freedom of press and civil society, has overlooked basic political rights of the citizens and does all it can to preserve the immunity of state security forces.

Even though protests began peacefully, protesters have been subject to violence since day one. Their main emphasis, as indicated previously, was on human rights, freedom and democracy, as they sought the support of various segments of society and of the international community. It is important to note here that "the peaceful phase of the revolution was a spontenous grassroots movement that involved various components of Syrian society" (Abu Khalil, 2013). The opposition declared they did not want a fight against the regime or sectarian tension, they just wanted political change and democratic transformation, and tried to win as much support as possible from various segments of society. The first leader of the Syrian National Council (SNC), B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), underlines the fact that "as an open and transparent vision concerning the future of Syria, the opposition pledged to be democratic, civilian, pluralist and egalitarian which would relate to its members equally regardless of their descent, gender, political affiliation, religion or sect". In this regard, the SNC even published a memorandum entitled "The National Pact on Syria of Future." The SNC succeeded in holding a joint conference under the auspices of the Arab League on July 3, 2012 in Cairo and after

[351] For instance, 46.3 % of the refugees staying in the camps in Turkey see the pressure of an authoritarian regime as the main reason for the uprisings in Syria (Güçer et al, 2013: 52).

some amendments, the pact, which was approved in the conference, was published under the name "National Pact".[352] Interview data suggests that people began to rally for democracy and freedom without engaging in any discrimination. For instance, even in Banias where the population is equally divided between Sunnis and Shiites, people worked together to demand the lifting of the state of emergency, the releasing the political prisoners and the allowance of those who are in exile the ability to return to Syria (O. al-Kamal, personal communication, January 8, 2013). At the time no one was actually considering toppling the regime (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013) and nobody made the conscious decision to start doing so. Instead, "it came spontaneously in the course of the Arab Spring" (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). The Syrian Mukhabarat found itself encountering an opposition that was resisting it, speaking up and insulting its president, even though it had been terrorizing and suppressing the same people for fifty years. In other words, "people who were tamed with a culture of tyranny and even slaughtered, were surprised at themselves, their situation was a surprise for them. It was as if a traffic accident took place" (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

Interview data suggests that it was also a generational uprising. It is difficult to analyze the events only through class-based arguments. To fully comprehend what happened, we should take into account the fact that there was a new generation coming of age that had no prospects for itself (Attia, 2011). This generation constituted the core membership of the uprisings. People had become desperate. For example, 75% of the youth in Hassaka province were unemployed and many of them were Sunnis. On the other hand, the Ministry of Petrol's posts for Hassaka were filled by only Alawites (90%) (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013; K. al-Jarba, personal communication, March 20, 2012).

Unlike Egypt, there was no accumulation of resistance experience that would allow the people to overthrow the president in a short period of time. The lack of support for the opposition was no more persuasive in face of the many problems that arose over the course of time. In other words, the initial support, which remained stable

[352] For further elaborations on the National Pact see Sayigh (2013: 13).

and even increased for a period of time, gradually faded. For example, the foundation of the FSA and its gradual strengthening as well as the union of various opposition elements and the support drawn from certain countries both encouraged the people and provided international actors with a more solemn approach in face of the lies spouted by the regime. In fact, Assad was not as powerful as he appeared in the beginning. In other words, there really were opportunities to enhance the motivation and mobilization of protesters. However, interview data suggests that the provocations created the perception that Assad's arguments had truth to them in the eyes of different local groups and international actors as well. As a result of foreign support obtained by Assad and Syria thanks to the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the country, such opportunities fell apart before they were able to mature.

8.3.1.2 Master Frame of the Regime

In light of my interviews and other findings, the essential strategy of Ba'ath regime has been to prevent any discussion regarding the facts and to prevent third parties from learning the facts. It is commonly claimed that the Ba'ath regime decided take this stance long before the protests began, and implemented this method from the beginning in order to maintain a legitimate discourse. As an authoritarian regime, it preferred to adopt the traditional approach of dealing with events. Since the early days of the protests, the regime perverted the reporting of events with 1) conspiracy theories, 2) expression of sectarian threats, and 3) claiming "war will break out if we leave". The regime framed the protests as a threat to Syria's unity, saying that there was an international plot against them and that terrorists, together with Islamists, wanted to use illegal means to destroy the regime which was the guarantee of Syria's national existence and union (Slackman, 2011; "Assad blames", 2011; Attia, 2011). It is evident that at the end of the day, this framework has been successful in shaping the perception of many both inside and outside of Syria. Thus, one of the reasons for the failure of the opposition is that the regime displaced the essence of discussions by implementing counter-framing strategies. In Abd Alqader Zizan's words, a Syrian freelance journalist, "the regime implemented a very successful framing strategy" (personal communication, January 7, 2013). Here it is necessary to note that how successful the regime was in adopting a counter-framing strategy was stressed during all the interviews.

Since the beginning of the uprising, the regime endeavored to justify this strategy and to introduce the opposition as criminals threating the Syrian state. Interview data suggests that by toying with the fault lines within society, the regime tried to distort the already fragile social harmony in Syria. It transformed this initial 'virtual reality', portraying the challengers as terrorists and criminals, though most claims were not credible. While their original claims were falsified, they eventually turned into reality when some fractions of the opposition filled the roles the Assad regime had created for them. The perception on the ground is that the regime tried to confuse the actors, who were the most likely to support the opposition in the country and who could impose pressure and sanctions against Assad. In doing so, they would not be aware of what was actually happening.

The regime's decision to prohibit international press from entering Syria and thanks to its communication tools and the support of Iran, the regime prevented the availability of any true information both to locals and to the international community (H. Ghadban, personal communication, January 7, 2013; "UK journalist defies", 2011; Freedom House, 2012). Assad, from the very beginning, has stated that the public respects and loves him, arguing that he is right in his struggle. Yet, the people on the streets keep asking the same following question raised by a member of FSA media committee during my interview: "If there is indeed a true struggle, if they are indeed fighting with armed gangs, if the events are not as big as has been said, then why the country is closed to the international media? What are they hiding?" (personal communication, January 31, 2013).

The release of video clips of the protests via social media and international media outlets was a clear message to the regime that it was no longer the 1980s and that they needed to change their strategy. The regime immediately realized this and took the necessary precautions. The regime did not have a clear idea as to what the reaction of the international community would be. In H. Hashemete's words, "the regime was facing the revolution and the biggest problem was the cameras" (personal communication, April 24, 2013; Also see Starr, 2012: 55). An important turning point occurred when Hamzah Ghadban, an American journalist of Syrian descent and also the first journalist to enter Syria at that time, shot scenes inside

Syria and later a London-based news channel broadcast these scenes via satellite. Thanks to these broadcasts, Syrians in various cities who were, to a great extent disconnected from one another, became aware of what the regime was doing. In the words of Ghadhan (personal communication, January 2, 2015), "when the wall of fear is surpassed, people increased in number. Thousands of people in Homs and Hama rushed to the streets"

The program which broadcast Ghadban's footage in London came to be the most watched program among Syrians and it greatly contributed to the opposition's ability to mobilize.[353] The Assad regime, which was aware of the impacts of these and other similar broadcasts, sought to increase the impact of its own discourse by limiting the entrance of international media to Syria. Thus, it tried to ensure that its own 'master frame' was believable, or that at least the potential allies of the revolution remained hesitant. Moreover, with this strategy, it is now an undeniable fact that the Assad regime's discourse distracted the world, allowed the violence to continue for an extended period of time, and, as the interview data suggests, it gave the regime time to formulate the necessary moves for the transformation of their virtual reality to actual reality. In this sense, the regime used the media as the most basic means of manipulation in a very effective manner. While international media was denied entrance into the country on the one hand, the regime's media, together with Iranian media, informed the Syrian and international public opinion in a one-sided way (Starr, 2012: 55).[354] In this regard, it is not possible to talk about the existence of any independent or neutral Syrian media. That is to say:

> In my opinion, the media in Syria was a complete machine of lies which sought to reflect the policies of the regime. In other words, (excuse me for this phrase but) a policy to make a donkey of people....Be it state or private, the media in Syria broadcasts in this way (A freelance Syrian journalist, personal communication, January 8, 2013).

[353] Several informal interviews with Syrians living in Jordan and Turkey.
[354] In Starr's words: "For the regime, its use of propaganda and, at times, a well-coordinated campaign, reassured many, particularly the country's minorities and those living in Aleppo and Damascus" (2012: 55).

According to most of my respondents the West has held to the regime's interpretation of the terrorist and Islamist threat and have aligned themselves accordingly; probabilities have led to confusion. Most of the Western groups[355] whom I talked to within the scope of this research were worried principally about Al-Qaeda (later on *Daesh*), Salafis and minorities. Syrians, however, had no concerns about ethnic and sectarian differences until the radical groups began to gain power (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014). Thus, there has been a struggle to confuse the international public opinion. It could not be verified whether all claims made by Assad were true or not unless the international media was able to enter Syria. It is here that the propaganda has played an essential role. As Assad's government understood early on, he has been trying to manipulate the international public opinion through official news channels and has been trying to monopolize the media to prevent news about Syria from being shown to the world. Assad himself talked about his own discourse and succeeded in reflecting it on the global agenda by giving several interviews with international channels.[356]

To sum up, thanks to the strategies utilized by the regime, they were successful in extending Bashar's reign in two ways. First, they succeeded in preparing a suitable ground for the opposition to arm themselves and therefore transformed the peaceful protests into an armed struggle. Even though there had not been any violence for twelve months in the Damascus region, which is one of the largest regions in Syria, the situation began to take a very different course[357] as a result of the atrocities and executions carried out by the parties. Interview data suggests that the attacks by the regime pushed the opposition to defend themselves with violence. As a Syrian doctor (personal communication, February 1, 2013) argues that:

> You cannot wait for enemy and Shabbiha to come to your houses and rape your women and choke your children before your eyes. You have to use self-defense and arm yourself, not for offense but just for defense. To put it another way, if

[355] Academic or diplomatic delegations from the Western countries (mainly from France, UK and the USA) visiting USAK for different occasions thorough the years between 2011-2015.
[356] He has interviewed with many international media outlets including France 2 TV, Swedish Expressen newspaper, CBS, Portuguese State TV, BBC, Foreign Affairs Magazine, AFP, Der Spiegel, Rai News and many others can be accessed at http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=categories&id=80&Itemid=468
[357] Informal interviews with Syrians from *Rif Damashq* living in refugee camps in Turkey.

> you live in a village and if Shabbiha comes to your village and massacres a family each day, it is certain that your turn will come.

Secondly, the regime was also successful in adding a sectarian element to the Syrian conflict. Interview data suggests that it was the regime who wanted to add this sectarian dimension, driving Syria into a sectarian civil war. The massacres that took place mostly on the coastal line and in the Sunni triangle, particularly Homs, Hama and Latakia, imply that the regime planned their attacks with a purpose (A. Sakallı, personal communication, February 18, 2013). According to local components, systematic massacres were carried out against Sunni villages.[358] For Pierret, "ordinary repression targets opponents from all sects, but collective punishments such as large scale massacres and the destruction of entire cities are reserved for Sunnis" (Abu Khalil, 2013). In addition, it was stressed in the interviews that Shabbiha also attacked some Alawite villages. In the same regard, O. al-Kamal (personal communication, January 8, 2013) states following: "So that it could ignite a sectarian war, Shabbiha simultaneously attacked one Alawite village and 6-7 Sunni villages". Thus, when it became clear that there was a sectarian war, the opposition was significantly constrained in influencing potential allies both inside and outside the state.

At the end of the day, there emerged a Syria where the problems stagnated, perceptions were turned upside down, and there was no existing or perceived 'political opportunity structure' adequate for the immature social movement. The opposition gradually lost motivation and synergy, subsequently becoming vulnerable to appropriation by different radical groups because of their access to arms, became involved in crime because of their lack of necessities, and thus, lost source of possible support. In B. Kodmani's words:

> The radicalization of the movement itself as a result of the brutality of the repression. The torture in prisons, the indiscriminate killings of unarmed demonstrators manufactured radicalism every day. … by the end of the 2012,

[358] I came across many ordinary civilian Syrians who had just passed the border sharing very depressing stories. For one of these stories see Dinçer and Karaca (2013: 20); Also see Abu Khalil (2013)

> they had been so traumatized and so much angered that they gradually sought to acquire arms (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Though the regime is criticized by many actors, we are at a point where the possibility of negotiating with the regime is an attractive option. It is clear that the 'virtual reality' created by the regime and its supporters in the beginning has turned into an 'actual reality'. In M. Barmu's words "the regime achieved the transformation of peaceful protests into armed conflicts as a result of systematic violence" (personal communication, January 5, 2013).

8.3.2 Assad's Counter-Revolution Strategies: De-Legitimizing the Protesters

To elaborate more on the process outlined above, it is possible to categorize what happened under several titles. It seems that the Assad administration and its supporters, like Iran, have maintained a clear strategy to prevent the 'Arab Spring' from entering into Syria ("Iran: Confidential", 2014). The question is how was this fundamental strategy employed by the regime? In other words, what were the components of this strategy that influenced the perception of the opposition or at least were mentioned by them in their many speeches? First of all, the main objective was – in accordance with their 'counter-framing' method – to delegitimize the protesters. Their discourse can be analyzed in five different categories. Indeed, upon an examination of the interviews, their comparisons with the speeches of regime officials, and my personal observations in the field, the five following main categories clearly stand out.

8.3.2.1 Activists as Criminals and Terrorists Fighting against the State

The first argument utilized in Assad's strategy was to criminalize the claim of rights that appeared in the first demonstrations by associating it with the world's most dangerous terrorist organization, al-Qaeda (Starr, 2012: 55-77; "State TV reports," 2012).[359]

[359] SANA, the Syrian government's official news agency, often refers to the FSA and the other opposition forces as "armed gangs" or "terrorists".

In the first months of the protests, almost all, except the regime, were in agreement that there were no armed groups participating in the protests (Sinjab, 2013; "In Syria, peaceful," 2012).[360] As stated by a Syrian tribal leader (personal communication, February 19, 2013) who lives in Hatay in Turkey, "Assad was saying that there were armed gangs in Syria from the very beginning of the revolutionary movement. Yet, there was only one armed gang, and it was the gangs of the Syrian *mukhabarat*". After a bloody year, the FSA began to arm itself with weapons, the constitution of which was 15 % of soldiers who defected from the Syrian Army and the other 80-85% constituted of civilians. For some time, there were positive predictions concerning the ability of the FSA, but its legitimacy declined over time. Following its decline, radical components were able to operate more comfortably in the fields.

In the interviews held after the FSA was established and it made some progress, interviewees were remarkably critical of FSA's mistakes.[361] Around that time, there were rumors circulating that the FSA was involved in theft and kidnappings and had therefore betrayed the revolution. I observed that these claims weakened the hand of the FSA, disappointed the people who had had considerable hopes for it and caused a marked decrease in the motivation of the opposition. However, interview data suggests that these criminals were not members of the FSA. Interviewees said that these crimes were perpetrated by actual gangs and criminals that were supported by the regime. There were claims that particular *ketibes* (military units) that were established were made up of these criminals who were in prison for years but later were released. Concerning these groups, there was one idea that was continually repeated in the interviews that I held in Syria with various FSA members along the Turkish border, tribal leaders and politicians: "The regime released these criminals so that they would cause malice and disorder. They donned the uniforms of the FSA, but they were not from the FSA" (personal communication, January 2013). In the same vein, the statements of A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21,

[360] Almost all world leaders accept that it was peaceful in the very beginning. Obama during his address to the nation on Syria says "Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war" (The White House, 2013).

[361] It was frequently stressed during the informal interviews with Syrian refugees that there were "criminals" (*haramiyyoon*) within FSA circles. Even one of the leaders of FSA (personal communication, January 31, 2013) admitted this, arguing that "we are also trying to detect these sorts of people within our groups (*kataib*)".

2013) also indicate a related point from a different perspective: "There are bad people within the FSA. In other words, those who did not know anything at all came to have a rule and say in the field. They are not few in number".

At this moment, radical armed groups began to emerge and there was born a disenchantment with the revolution. In this way, the opposition began to experience problems in cogency. This was also a time in which more and more people began to believe Assad's argument: "Did not I say to you we are fighting against armed gangs?" he said. Though the reality on the ground suggests that 'at the beginning' and 'in essence' these groups came into existence as a result of the violence employed by the regime or in one sense as a result of a pre-planned project of the regime itself (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014). According to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), this strategy entailed the regime calling on high ranking officials from extremist groups working in Iraq and Lebanon to get involved in the conflict -as the regime already had a past affiliation with many of them- to creating new opportunities for the regime.[362] With such aims, it was sufficient to release extremists who had for a long time been detained in Saydnaya and Abu Ghraib prisons.[363] It should also be noted that between 2003 and 2008, the Syrian regime sent jihadists to Iraq to fight against the US army. In fact, within two years Daesh has succeeded in completing its restructuring, attracting members and elements from outside the region and through its covert alliance with, or at least ability to avoid the regime, become one of the most important actors in the Syrian conflict (Weiss & Hassan, 2015). Consequently, it launched operations to seize control of areas including the towns and villages liberated by the FSA.[364] In addition to these claims, there were also claims that Assad facilitated people's access to weapons by leaving trucks full of weapons in the streets of Sunni neighborhoods, while simultaneously arming Alawite villages in order to militarize the conflict (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013). No

[362] Also B. Kodmani (personal communication, November 13, 2014) argues that "ISIS fighters flowed into the country as a result of the chaos that the [Syrian] regime actively encouraged, the fighters were men who had been used by the regime in the past and were now 'welcome to create the chaos', and fight the reasonable groups to de-legitimize them so the regime could appear as the lesser evil".
[363] This is one of the most frequently mentioned points in the interviews, particularly ones with B. Ghailoun and H. Hashemete.
[364] This data is based on my interviews with more than 40 local elements (Iraq, Jordan, Turkey) conducted for another project on Daesh between December 2014 and January 2015.

matter whether these claims are true or not, it is obvious that, in B. Kodmani's words, "it was in the interest of the regime to radicalize the movement so that it could have a legitimate reason to suppress it" (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

As indicated previously, manipulation of the conflict by the regime was observed from the first day, even before the protests were unfolded. Most of my interviewees frequently referred to the presence of al-Qaeda militants as serving to legitimize the regime's intervention in the public sphere. In B. Ghailoun's words:

> The Syrian regime has done all it can to distort the image and harm the respectability of this peaceful and democratic political revolution that had garnered the sympathies of the entire world. Thus the regime wanted, on the one hand to facilitate the alienation of the revolution, while at the same time legitimize the violence it deployed against the rightful and determined resistance of the Syrian people (personal communication, November 23, 2014).

Similarly, for instance, Assad continued sending messages to Washington claiming that the Syrian regime was fighting terrorists, not a public revolt, underlining the growing influence of al-Qaeda, their common enemy, within the Syrian opposition.[365] Likewise, Syria tried to persuade Russia that there was an armed uprising against the regime. Thus, the regime emphasized the necessity of a military reaction in order to suppress the protests. Such propaganda made it clear that any regime that might oust Assad would be anti-Russian and the addressees bought such messages. As one of the young leaders of the Syrian uprising, O. al-Kamal (personal communication, January 8, 2013), told me:

> If it had not been for the provocations and violence, how could Assad support his arguments? It is very important to see who took advantage of the provocations. Thanks to the bloody violence, Assad took the right of legal intervention for granted and his ability to declare that he is fighting against armed gangs.

[365] It is fair to argue that for that particular reason Assad has been performing extraordinarily by accepting interview requests from Western journalists and marketing these interviews in order to convince the Western public.

The systematic manipulation supported by Iran both aims to pervert the reporting of incidents in Syria and sabotage the initiatives of the countries trying to solve the problems. In this respect, the speech made by Assad on March 30th was very impressive even though it did not include any messages concerning the public opinion (Whitaker, 2011). Instead, the speech sounded more like propaganda to sway international public opinion. It had characteristics of black propaganda and was given by the head of the state.

The developments that occurred both during and after the Geneva II Conference on Syria, which took place in late January 2014[366], also illustrate how the grounds for negotiations were shifted in the discourse of terrorism employed by the regime. The aim of the conference was to pave the way for a political solution to the crisis ("What is the Geneva", 2014). The stance of the Assad regime in regards to what kind of political solution they envisioned was clear. On one hand, the opposition demonstrated its support for solution by participating in the Geneva II Conference on Syria. In the words of Sare (2014), this support was concretized by "the arguments put forward and the stance posed by the regime during the conference". The Geneva II Conference on Syria was particularly in accordance with such guidelines as the establishment of a transitory government with full authority and the realization of the decisions made during the Geneva I Conference in 2012. On the other hand, in parallel to the weak performance of the UN and the entire international society, including the states that endorsed the conference, the Ba'ath regime tried to reorient the conference toward their own goals of dealing with the terrorism issue. It is necessary to remember that the stance of Russia was also responsible for the failure of the Geneva II Conference. To be sure, the failure of the conference in producing a political solution helped religious and nationalist forces gain momentum (Sare, 2014).

8.3.2.2 The Conspiracy Discourse

The second pillar of the strategy involved allegations that 'traitors in collaboration with foreign partners' plotted 'mischief' in the country. Assad mostly referred to internal provocations during his speeches, blaming the perpetrators of such incidents.

[366] The conference took place on January 22, 2014 in Montreux and on January 23-31, 2014 in Geneva (Switzerland), the second round of negotiations took place on February 10-15, 2014.

He has been claiming that they deceived the people and at this point, the country should be rid of them. The narrative of the regime from the very beginning was that it was facing a foreign conspiracy and groups of terrorists while the people in the streets were peacefully protesting. According to B. Kodmani (personal communication, November 13, 2014) its message was that "if the movement continues and threatens the regime, the regime would set ablaze the whole region. It was a powerful warning to Syrians and others that the geopolitics were going to be mobilized against the people and their aspirations".

He referred to both the legal and illegal challenges to the regime and blamed the activists for assaulting governmental institutions. He also stated that perpetrators were hiding behind the people with legal demands and blamed external forces. Moreover, he claimed that the external forces were providing funds to the protesters in order to keep them on the streets. He implicitly argued that there are ones trying to influence Syria ("Interview with Syrian", 2011). The fact that Bashar al-Assad did not mention the role of Iran on the ground did not escape the notice of the Syrians. This was the most direct way to be chosen according to interviewees. Even, interview data suggests that if Iran had not influenced Syria, Assad could not have spoken in such a self-confident way… (B. Hefar, personal communication, September 19, 2012). In B. Ghailoun's words:

> In addition to the structure of the social base, the strategic alliances that the regime established with Tehran which wanted to play a leading role in the region, further cut its links with society. It is evident that the Assad regime would have fallen down in the midst of 2012, if there had not been the intervention of Lebanese, Iraqi, Afghan and Iranian sectarian and secessionist militias who were trained and armed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (personal communication, November 23, 2014).

The arguments maintaining that the events in Syria are a Western plot have gained serious popularity (Voa News, 2012).[367] This means that there was a growing inability to see the realities playing out in the region and that the perception of events was being manipulated. In the same way, such an approach pays no attention to the

[367] This is an interesting news segment arguing that the Syrian public school instructors teach students that the ongoing conflict is a foreign conspiracy.

legitimacy of the struggle for democracy and human rights and the people dying under Ba'athist oppression. However, this does not mean that different intelligence organizations are not busy in the field. After the uprising began, the organizations involved worked to channel the events in the direction of their choice. Iran, Israel, Russia, the USA, Turkey and France are the countries most mentioned in my interviews. That these actors are particularly focused on the Kurdish north-eastern Syria is thought-provoking (K. al-Jarba, personal communication, March 20, 2012). The major regional and global actors have also been trying to recruit men who would supposedly participate in the post-Assad Syria. In this sense, the aforementioned actors have already begun meetings with different Syrian groups to plan for the period after Assad. Even countries such as Russia and Iran who support the regime are known to have entered into close contact with different opposition groups. Actors like the United States, France and Britain are in contact with almost all different groups through intelligence agencies and civil society organizations as well, using 'second track' instruments of diplomacy.

Since the regime claims that the current uprisings were instigated by the West and views them as a threat to its sovereignty, it employs the military to crush them. Moreover, the regime's anti-imperialist, anti-Western rhetoric has developed in parallel to its emphasis on state sovereignty. This combination results in a discourse that allows the regime to determine any opposition activity to be foreign-based, American backed, etc. Publications, NGOs, conferences are targeted on the grounds that they are covert arms of foreign countries working to undermine Syria's sovereignty. This rhetoric can also be seen in Assad's recent statements about the conflict. This discourse of a general, continuous foreign-backed threat has been used by the regime to justify its strict control over society. Therefore, it is still an important tool for Ba'athist Syria, in Hinnebusch's words continuing "to substitute nationalist legitimacy derived from the defiance of US and Israeli power in the region for democratization" (2006: 381).

8.3.2.3 The Sectarian Card

Despite the repressive policies pursued by Syria's Ba'ath Party since the second half of the 1960's, sectarian and social tensions had not spread among the general public, especially not to such a wide base. Furthermore, the tensions that were visible in

Syria resulted not from sectarian fault lines, but as a response to the Ba'ath regime's ostracizing and authoritarian policies. Up until the outbreak of the conflict, unlike in Iraq, sectarian and religious identities did not surface at the societal level and people in general were much more tolerant of differences. However, this tolerance did not translate to the public's feelings toward the regime. With regard to the conflict ravaging the country today, it should be noted that the Ba'ath administration has been very successful in militarizing the Syrian uprising while simultaneously drumming it up to be sectarian in nature, despite the reality that the protests used to represent a popular movement completely lacking sectarian tone.

The struggle against the regime, which began peacefully, has taken on a sectarian element through the involvement of Iran, Hezbollah and, more recently, Daesh. Currently the Syrian state is "under the threat of being taken hostage and embezzled by a sectarian authority based in Tehran, through the support of local militias" (B. Ghailoun, personal communication, November 23, 2014). At the outset, the riots erupted in smaller and underdeveloped regions where class differences were exaggerated and sectarian conflict was not part of the mix. It is possible to read the riots as a reaction against the regime from the underdeveloped countryside, those who feel alienated and marginalized in the larger cities, and those who live in medium sized cities like Homs or Latakia (Saleeby, 2012). Since the people in Aleppo and Damascus are either in alliance with the regime or suffer less discrimination, no revolt occurred in these two cities until later on in the revolution (Attia, 2011).

The protests, slogans, and the representatives of the opposition always emphasized that the uprising had no sectarian ground. In an interview at the very beginning of the uprising, a Syrian Sunni youngster emphasized that the uprising had no sectarian base as follows:

> The extreme violence from the army can be ascribed to the presence of Alawi senior officials in the army; nevertheless, there is no sectarian dissolution or reciprocal violence among the people. In the beginning, certain Christians and non-Sunnis may have feared a possible regime change. Now, however, some of them talk about solidarity, and even join in protests. For example, in recent

> weeks, some protests took place in the southern city of al-Suwayda where the majority of the population is Druze (cited in Dincer & Coskun, 2011: 22)

Yet, the biased media coverage of the events in Syria seemed to intentionally downplay the real issues at stake by focusing on the claims that there was conflict between the Alewite and Sunni population. The military and regime have been depicted as the saviors of the people (Lundgren-Jörum, 2012: 19). On the other hand, the Syrian people who have deployed peaceful means of protest with no reference to sectarian ideology have been depicted as armed gangs. In fact, the situation can be described as an issue of 'victimization'. In reality, the scenario of 'sectarian conflict' reflects attempts to legitimize certain interests rooted in the status quo. The winners and rewards of such a scenario must be analyzed. First and foremost, with the eruption of a sectarian conflict the center of the struggle subsequently shifts. There are also numerous told incidents that demonstrate the regime's efforts to transform the conflict into a sectarian one, not only by using media but also by provoking groups against one another (Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 48). For instance, one of the interviewees stated:

> They [intelligence agents] were coming and telling the Sunnis of Banias that Alawite villages would attack them at 12 mid-night. The same agents were going to Alawites and telling them that Sunnis would be attacking them at the same time. They were basically trying to start an ethnic/sectarian war between the two (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

This would allow time for the Syrian regime to relax according to the interview data. Moreover, the possibility of a sectarian conflict would not only serve the regional powers, but also certain global powers, at least people on the ground perceive so. When their inaction came into question, they would be able to justify it by saying "they are struggling with primordial religious problems, they have no legitimate demands" (A Syrian Sufi leader, personal communication, January 8, 2013). Furthermore, the interview data suggests that the rhetoric of 'sectarian conflict' fragments the Middle East and also pleases those that do not want the Muslim world to be united. With regards to this argumentation, there has been also another widespread perception that the expansionary policies of the Iranian regime have been indirectly aiding those that have some interests over the region. In that sense as one

of the interviewees (an FSA fighter) (personal communication, January 31, 2013) states that "the latest coverage of the situation is trying to build the grounds for the intensification of a sectarian conflict. Those that aren't comfortable with the regime's current situation are trying to change the frame and spark an actual sectarian conflict".

It could be said that the people did not heed to such provocations and manipulations for a long time. Likewise, interview data suggests that both the rational Sunnis and Alawites were aware of the fact that the regime was trying to trigger a sectarian war. For a while, in H. Hashemete's words, "it was really a beautiful scene of national unity how these people from different villages united in understanding that they did not have any problems and it was the regime trying to make them fight each other" (personal communication, April 24, 2013). However, it was clear that due to mounting desperation, the intervention of Shabbiha, Hezbollah and radical Sunni groups, and their inflammatory discourses and attacks, the sectarian conflict discourse employed in the beginning began to become a reality on the ground.

According to interview data, the FSA has secured some regions and towns through guerilla warfare. The organized army focuses on big cities such as Hama and Damascus and avoids entering densely populated neighborhoods. Before entering such towns residential areas are destroyed through artillery fire. Furthermore, it is claimed that Assad distributes weapons to his own supporters, particularly to Alawites living in the mountainous regions, in the case an outbreak of civil war or any kind of intervention. These developments can be interpreted to mean that the regime is laying the grounds for the partition of the country on sectarian lines in the event of an intervention (Heras, 2013).

8.3.2.4 Threat of Islamists

In addition, the argument that if the Assad regime goes, Islamists would take over and Syria would become the region's new Afghanistan has been frequently employed by the regime and its supporters. Even the Christian minority that makes up 9 percent of the population of 22 million has been giving open support to Assad because of such concerns. Assad has efficiently manipulated the concerns of the Christian

minority (Sabra, 2014; B. Kodmani, personal communication, May 27, 2014).[368] The aim of Assad allegedly using troops made up of Christian and Druze units is to create further fall out with the Sunnis and minority groups.

Along with the conflict which took on an armed dimension, Assad's particular discourse toward Alawites and other minorities generated more resonance (Starr, 2012: 29-54). In this discourse, Assad asserted that 'There emerged radical Islamist groups. If they grab the power in Syria, they will slaughter you. These are fanatic groups and they do not accept 'the other' since they espouse al-Qaeda ideology and they are pro-extremism groups' ("Fearing Change", 2012). In short, it was believed that the regime tried to ignite sectarian conflict so that it would be able to draw different minority groups to its side. Yet, interview data suggests that the Alawite sect is not completely pro-regime and that not all Alawites benefitted from the opportunities provided by the regime. It is true that there is a certain section that benefits from the regime, but the majority of them live in severe poverty in Alawite villages (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). Nevertheless, the regime was successful in pushing the victimizations of Alawite society into the background through the discourse that it employed. After it succeeded in transforming the conflict into a sectarian one, the regime was able to gain the support of minorities as the Alawites and Christians who began to worry about their futures. As a result of the polarization created, the belief in the necessity of maintaining the status quo increased. It is important to note here that this took place particularly after Christian villages and Christian neighborhoods in Damascus were attacked. It is also worth mentioning that certain attacks created at least some question marks in the minds of the people. To illustrate, one of the most frequently asked questions was how anybody other than the regime could be capable of taking the vehicles full of bombs into the center of Damascus as it wished:

> Could a church in Deir ez-Zor, a car bomb in Beyt Tume and another car bomb in Cermana, a center for Durzis be blown up within three days due to the stupidity of the Syrian intelligence? Is it just a coincidence that three different

[368] This particular point was underlined in B. Kodmani's speech at ECFR meeting in Copenhagen, May 27, 2014. According to Dr. Marwan Khoury, the Assad regime has been exploiting Syrian Christians for a long time: "Many official Church dignitaries in Syria have been working with the secret service for years" (cited in Sabra, 2014).

> locations were targeted successively within three days? Particularly, Cermana region is entirely full of local committees, the region is also on the road to the airport and it is under control of air intelligence. In addition, there are local committees that protect Cermana due to the Durzi presence. Then who could take a car bomb into Cermana or Beyt Tume? (B. Ghailoun, personal communication, November 23, 2014).

Particularly with the emergence of Daesh, the conflict in the field took on a sectarian dimension in the full sense of the word. Now, while on the one hand Daesh is killing Alawites, Christians and even Sunnis, on the other hand Shabbiha, Hezbollah and other similar groups are killing Sunni people because of sectarian differences.

8.3.2.5 Unredeemed Reform Promises

Interview data suggests that any compromises will be unsuccessful in ending social unrest if there is no fundamental change to the core governmental system. Additionally, any compromises have the possibility of inviting further demands. Therefore, it is widely acknowledged by Syrians that the change must begin from the within the government and move outwards. This is the only way to convince people that there will be true change. In this sense, the real problem has been whether the regime will accept any fundamental changes. Unless such a change occurs, the present situation will inevitably continue to degenerate. Interview data puts forward that the regime cannot and will not make any reforms as a result of the ossified elite alliance structure and the influence of Iran on security forces continue. As a matter of fact, many of my respondents argue that Assad also knows that national dialogue with opposition groups cannot be modified. However, to my informants, he is demonstrating his ‘good-will’ to be able to say ‘I called for dialogue but they did not accept it.’ At the same time, this was a purposeful action to gain more time. For instance, according to A. Bakeer (personal communication, February 19, 2013), a defected judge living in Adana:

> This was such a corrupt regime that it had no ability to make reform. If it is reformed, it will collapse. That is, even if the regime establishes an impartial judicial system, the media becomes free, and state employees become decent and competent, this regime is destined to fall. That's why the main goal was to win time and to turn its discourse and arguments into reality.

Nevertheless, as a result of the frequent mention of reforms by Assad and his warm welcome for suggestions for dialogue and reform recommended from other actors, many questions remained. Bashar al-Assad mentioned some reforms in his first speech. He talked about the possibility of the enlargement of the scope of the amnesty law; he pointed out that elections would be held in August 2011 and stated that they were going to start a national dialogue project. Yet, the people on the street did not believe in these promises. As another Syrian judge (personal communication, February 19, 2013) who defected from the Aleppo criminal court suggested the following during the interview:

> Will those promises persuade the public? It is not very logical to think that they will. Why should people trust a regime who has promised to implement reforms but has not done anything for years? A concrete step has not been taken so far. If somebody has the will and desire to make reforms, they do so instantly. It is really difficult to understand why they keep waiting. What delays the regime from making a reform today? Or is it that they will not make any reforms but just try to keep everyone in suspense to gain a little bit of more time? A lot of dictators around the world act like this. Many years pass while they provide false hopes about making reforms.

In addition, the alleged dialogue with some of the opposition groups within the country is considered by the external Syrian opposition and the ones who are in direct conflict as an action to create confusion and to divide the opposition. In other words, interview data suggests that the regime entered into negotiations with the 'false opposition' in Syria in order to demonstrate that it was not against domestic dialogues, but instead sought them out. In this regard, what M. Barmu, the leader of one of the more recently formed political parties in Syria argues is very important. He states that:

> The regime wants to play a dirty game. It tries to project itself as democratic to the external world and it allows the establishment of new parties. We also got involved into this dirty game. We accepted the establishment of a party within the regime to protect our youth. What the regime wanted was to project itself as democratic to the world and we also participated in this game. 90% of the parties which were established in Syria are pro-regime. They are pro-regime

> and puppets of the regime, but all of the parties are not like this (personal communication, January 5, 2013).

Thus, it can be argued that one of the main objectives of Assad's campaign against the opposition has been to hamper any possible togetherness and to prevent the emergence of a much stronger and cohesive adversary. Accordingly, the Assad regime disseminated propaganda means to decrease the legitimacy of opposition groups abroad.

On every occasion, a national dialogue was mentioned by the regime. Yet, it is commonly acknowledged that in order to pursue a dialogue, the other side should also be in favor of the dialogue. As a Syrian political activist, Ahmed Eyyad (personal communication, April 2012), stated:

> The public or the opposition should believe that there is something to achieve. However it is not possible for the regime to be welcomed with a positive attitude in an atmosphere where it cannot explain why it does not make any reforms. There are still explanations such as 'we intend to make the reforms; this is what we think and plan'. Why is it impossible to take a concrete step immediately? Because they do not have such an intention

The pseudo-reforms have been perceived among the Syrians as purposeful steps towards deceiving people in order to ease Western pressure and cheat Syrians. For example, as interviewees claim and the statistics clearly illustrate, even though Assad abolished the State of Emergency following the first uprising, the number of deaths, custodies and arrests continued increasing even after the first weeks of its abolishment. The regime has used emergency law from as far back as 1963 up until 2011. However, just after its abolishment, it was replaced by another law called the Counter-terrorism law, or in B. Ghailoun's words "the law of fighting against the peaceful revolution that demands rights and freedoms" (personal communication, November 23, 2014). On the day that the Annan plan was accepted, around 100 Syrians were killed.[369] Additionally, the new constitution, introduced for a plebiscite by Assad, was not actually meaningful. On the contrary, the new constitution enabled

[369] This data was gathered during my visit to Tel Abyad (January 31, 2013) but was not able to be verified with reputable sources.

Assad to rule for seven years and to be a candidate once again after this period. The recent elections which were held in June 3rd, 2014 afterwards and Assad was elected again under these circumstances ("Assad re-elected", 2014). This means that there is the possibility that Assad might stay in power for 14 more years. A Syrian political activist (personal communication, January 5, 2015) clearly asks the following questions:

> He gave a date for the elections. What difference does it make if there is an election every day in Syria while the current situation continues like this? If there is no toleration of criticism, if there are no different political formations and if the media does not run properly, the result will not change even if there is an election. There are so many things to change to have a transparent and non-fraudulent election.

Interview data suggests that the latest proposal to allow political parties, elections and the referendum for the constitution of the Assad regime has not resonated with the public, as there are many more obstacles to democracy besides this law. An opposition figure describes the public sentiment clearly;

> What's the use of this law if we cannot travel to Dera'a and Baniyas and Latakia and to different Syrian cities and meet with people and assemble? What's the use of the law if we are going to be persecuted by the security forces for simply disagreeing with the government or be put in prison for organizing a political meeting? (cited in "Syria Passes Law", 2011).

Interview data suggests that these false parties, elections and parliament are allowed to remain in order to create a 'theatre of democracy' for the external world and for the consolidation of the regime's image. They are constructed in a way that does not challenge the status-quo. Nevertheless, the regime is aware of the public dissatisfaction with the laws on political parties and the electoral process. Thus, one of the initial reforms the Assad regime proposed in response to the ongoing protests was to allow the formation of political parties ("Syria Passes law", 2014).

8.3.3 The Factors That Raised the Impact of the Counter-Framing

8.3.3.1 The role of religious cleric, businessmen and tribesmen

The army turned its back to the regime in Egypt and this caused the regime to fall quickly. However in Syria, there is a strong link both among the state institutions and between these institutions and the regime. The dynamics of the relations between political elites, elites in the business world and religious men depend on many different factors. The Syrian regime came to be after a sectarian coup d'état put the future of society under its dominion and gave the rule to the military junta that was detached from the society. This rule somehow succeeded in overcoming social and political isolation by creating a social base for itself by the means of gaining the favor of the people (see chapter V). In B. Ghailoun's words "there was created a structure which empowered itself through tribal leaders, was consisted of all who pursued their self-interests other than national and ethical ones and NGO's which were directly linked to the regime" (personal communication, November 23, 2014). In the end, there emerged a social base whose members pursued their own interests regardless of societal conscience and political responsibility. In addition to eternalizing the regime, the personal gains were also meant to be maximized. According to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), this point explains the ruling power's ability to maintain its relations with the main social base, "despite all barbarity which the leaders used when fighting against their own people, and further, despite the devastating war which local army forces began and maintained in operation with foreign militias for four years". For these reasons, Assad still can claim that the people support him. However, as stated by an activist (personal communication, January 6, 2015):

> Ceausescu was able to gather ten thousands of people in Bucharest to demonstrate in his favor. This is not a very difficult thing to do. It can be done with intimidation or with money. Moreover, they do have supporters. However, this situation cannot be generalized.

In parallel with what B. Ghailoun states, A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) also makes similar points. According to him, there are also structural interests which have been established within this 45 year-old regime. The people, who are divided by religious leaders, are divided into two groups: the pro-revolution and the pro-regime. The businessmen are also divided into two groups: the pro-revolution and the pro-regime. These different factions of the society have

already been divided into two groups and each group has its own justifications. In the words of A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013):

> Whilst there are people who desire salvation, in fact the rest of people are also like this; businessmen have their own calculations and religious men have also their own goals. At the end of the day, the society has come to be divided. Also, while some are afraid of losing their lives, others are afraid that their interests have been taken out of their hands.

The cooptation of respected religious leaders (ulama) puzzled particularly those who were hesitant both in Syria and abroad. In chapter V, I mentioned the dynamics of co-optation and their effects on society. Here, I will rather try to explain what kind of effects this setting created during the crisis.

First of all, it is important to note that the Syrian Sheikhs, primarily the Sheikhs in Damascus and Aleppo, who had long enjoyed great popularity, incurred a considerable loss of prestige after the start of the uprisings. Now they suffer not only from a loss of popularity but also a decrease in their respected status. There has even emerged a perception that they are cowards (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). It is stated that even though they called people to jihad from their pulpits *(minbar)* for years, when the uprisings unfolded they disappeared, fled or turned their backs on the people. Nevertheless, interview data suggests that as seen in the case of Ramazan al-Buti, there were Syrians who remained hesitant for a long time or did not join the ranks of the opposition because al-Buti did not adopt a stance against the regime (G. al-Skarty, personal communication, January 8, 2013).

It is clear that the majority of those who sided with the social movements and even led these movements were the third and fourth generations of religious leaders. The first and second generations are defined as those who are of traditional *madrasah* (educational institution) origin, and were seen as cowards and supporters of the regime in many spheres (Khatib, 2011: 104-105). Certainly, this situation holds for women as much as it does for men. For instance, there was a Damascus based religious establishment called *Kubeysiyât* (Kubeysî Women) Organization, which consisted of influential religion women, having hundreds of thousands of members throughout Syria. The long-standing neutral stance of Kubeysî Women towards

revolution was remarkable. In time, however, the organization experienced certain divisions within itself and suffered problems. Majority of the women responsible for teaching left the organization because of its neutral stance and joined the revolution (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). Similarly, some of the sheikhs in Damascus and Aleppo started to move in line with the revolution. Yet, interview data suggests that those sheikhs who were on the side of the revolution from the very beginning (Sheikh Kerim Rahic, Sheikh Usame al-Rufai, Sheikh Sari al-Rufai, the family of al-Kettâni) constituted a small percentage (1-2%) (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

Sheikh Usame al-Rufai is an example of one of the most important opposition figures among the religious leaders. He criticized the violent acts of the regime and has called on the regime to have mercy, questioning why the unrightfully arrested are not set free, especially during Ramadan (2011) (Güvel, 2011). The Rufai Mosque, where he used to preach, was one of the rare locations in which the people went to pray for the victims of Hama and Deir Ezzor. The fact that soldiers waited in front of the mosque during Friday prayers, shows that the government was aware of the activities going on in the mosque (Güvel, 2011). Nevertheless, the regime's permission to let Shaykh Usame al-Rufai preach was an indication of his power in society. Moreover, Muaz al-Khatib, the old preacher of the Ummayad Mosque, was released in May 2011, after having been arrested for speaking out against the regime ("Syrian police", 2011). Clearly, since they had the ability to mobilize society, the regime was sure to be careful with its treatment of the sheikhs, at least at the beginning.

It can be said that the stances of religious leaders affected one another's stances and that their doubt that the regime would fall played a decisive role in their stances. For example, Ahmed Hassun, the mufti of Syria, is from Aleppo. Before him, the position was held by Suheyb al-Shami who is the director of religious endowments in Aleppo. Both of them were on the side of the regime for a long time and they showed no sign of changing sides (Pierrett, 2013).[370] Here, the statements of a sheikh (personal communication, January 8, 2013) who knows both of them are important. According to this sheikh, who wanted to remain anonymous, Ahmed Hassun said the

[370] For an outstanding book on the division between the Sunni clergy and regime supporters, bystanders and opponents see Pierrett (2013).

following “If I defect from the regime, this means that I side with the revolution. If the regime defeats the revolution, perhaps I would be honored by the praise of Suheyb al-Shami.” Similarly, Suheyb al-Shami says the following “even if I defect from the regime and declare my support for the revolution, the regime would maintain its existence. Then I would have no existence in Syria since if the regime survives, it would show mercy to nobody”. It is this fear of them which shakes their reputation in the eyes of people and leaves people undecided whether to remain on the side of the regime or join the revolution. All in all, they are not sure that the regime will fall. Interview data suggests that if they had been sure of this, they would have defected from the regime (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013).

Considering the number of civilians killed, arrested, and missing since the beginning of the protests, it seems these prominent figures have been treated relatively well. The fact that the regime refrains from killing or jailing such prominent religious figures shows the potential of their call for reform. However, since many prominent imams have chosen to align themselves with the regime and other imams have refrained from criticizing the regime until the recent violent crackdowns, demonstrating the important lack of pressure on the regime.

8.3.3.2 Special Approach to Aleppo and Damascus

In the case of the middle merchants, their co-optation proved to be very beneficial to the ruling elite. Salwa Ismail (2009: 16) provides us with an important example. In 1980, the merchants of Aleppo decided to strike in protest of the regime and in support of both the leftist and Islamist opposition that was beginning to form. However, their success was dependent on merchants joining them from other cities. The merchants of Damascus, who were the most powerful ones, refused to join the protests in Aleppo because they had close relations with the regime. Therefore, as Ismail (2009: 17) states, “to this day, many local observers believe that the Damascene merchants could have brought down the regime but chose not to do so”.

It should be specifically noted that the family of the Makhlufs and its partners became the most important businessmen in Syria under Bashar al-Assad's rule. Their prosperity was based on tyrannical strategies which included extorting wealth from

others and establishing forced partnerships with successful businessmen by blackmailing them. Interview data suggests that many existing businessmen in Damascus and Aleppo did not side with the revolution, fearing that they would later be interrogated due to the massive amount of money they won from these partnerships and also the black money they laundered. The Makhluf family turned many businessmen into captives to themselves and to the regime by making them involved into numerous illegal operations particularly during the years between 2005 and 2010 (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013).

The opposition was unsuccessful in getting across their messages properly to the fragments who were afraid of the regime. To illustrate, the opposition could have given certain guarantees that Islam also forgave the sins of the past, thus in the case that the revolution succeeded, the business partners of the Makhlufs and similar families would not face dramatic consequences in the courts of the revolution due to the illegal gains that they took from their partnerships. Many businessmen were panicked that there would be established courts for the revolution and that their wealth would be confiscated (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). The opposition could have sent positive messages to all who did not undertake violent operations and did not support Shabiha with their money so that they could have been added to the ranks of the revolution. Even though the opposition tried to do this, its messages were not found credible and the messages of the regime were believed more and more (A couple of Syrian businessmen, personal communication, February 19, 2013).

From another point of view, the events in Aleppo are worth analysis in order to comprehend what kind of a deception was going on. Assad adopted another strategy in order to portray certain cities as ‘regime-friendly’, exaggerating support for the regime, and thus easing foreign reactions. In Aleppo, where no military operation or intense blockade occurred for a long time, interview data suggests that the adversaries were detained in the dark. The security measures were also higher in Aleppo than in any other city (A couple of Syrian businessmen, personal communication, February 19, 2013). In short, the regime tried to create an impression that there were no actions by the opposition in Aleppo. Interview data suggests that it could therefore easily pretend that ‘there is a huge mass behind us’ (A

couple of Syrian businessmen, personal communication, February 19, 2013). At this stage, it is fair to argue that Assad behaved more cleverly than Gaddafi. Refraining from an overt, extensive attack over an extended period, Assad created a space available for manipulation, thus succeeding in confusing people who tried to understand what was going on in Syria. The access of international media to the country was strictly limited since the beginning. Although no events occurred in the city centers, intense clashes continued especially in the suburbs of Damascus (Douma, Zamalka, Azra, Qaboun, Harasta, Kiswah, Kafarsoussah, Khadem). Yet, interview data suggests that Assad was concerned that this alliance system would collapse if people ran out of patience.

At this point, the limited events in Syria's largest cities, Aleppo and Damascus, largely inhabited by the middle class, could be related to different causes: The division of religious authorities in these cities into two and therefore, the failure of alliance formation, the inability of the people in these cities with higher revenue to take a clear stand due to their uncertainty of what the days without the support of the Assad regime would bring for them. The Sunni and Christian elite in these cities, who have not been able to see the end of the regime, maintained a relationship based on interest, but not loyal to the regime, preventing them from bringing down the regime. Unlike other cities, the intense security in place in these cities blocked demonstrations from taking place.

The policies of the Syrian regime during the time of Hafez al-Assad were based on maintaining their power firm enough. Bashar al-Assad worked to maintain these policies during his rule. He has not allowed the presence of any personality or leader who the people might trust or accept as a reference point. He also eradicated all opinionated leaders so that they would not rise up against him and installed incapable people in high-level positions, not only in the state system but in the tribal portion of society. Interview data suggests that he humiliated, denigrated and offended many well-informed, intellectual and respected sons of tribes and families by firing them and bringing in untrained and unintelligent replacements. In M. Barmu’s words:

> When the revolution started, the regime tried to buy off tribal leaders, deceiving them with attractive offers such as money, weapons and cars so that they would defend the regime. They were subsequently required to defend the

> regime and side with it. The personalities the regime brought amongst were loyal to the regime, thus they would transform along with the regime. However, those who were dignified and noble objected to this. Today, the truths are being revealed day by day. The tribes themselves reject the leaders and reveal who is loyal to the regime or loves it (personal communication, January 5, 2013).

For example, according to a leader of one of the biggest Syrian tribes, in mid-2012, 7-8 very important tribes in Syria drew significant support away from the Assad regime and three of these tribes were Kurdish, and the others were Arab tribes originating in Lebanon (personal communication, January 2, 2015). This might be considered foreshadowing that eventually different groups would withdraw their support for the regime. To speak to our current situation, potential tribal allies of the revolution did not overtly emerge because of both the stance adopted by international actors and the scale of radicalization taking place in the field. Over time, a majority of these potential allies fell under the control of Daesh or similar groups as a result of their need for some kind of support. Here it is worth looking at the arguments made by Carole O'Leary and Heras (2012, 2013).[371]

One of the prominent characteristics of tribal leaders is the fact that at all levels they are pragmatic. They will not risk their tribesmen and tribeswomen being slaughtered if they are out-gunned by Daesh or the Assad regime. Since tribes are primarily concerned with survival, interview data suggests that the inability of international actors to effectively demonstrate a sustained commitment led them to consider alternative sources of support and protection. In November 2013, the leaders of 14 Arab tribal groups pledged support to Daesh in the central-eastern city of Raqqa, demonstrating this point (A Syrian tribal leader, personal communication, January 2, 2015).

Since Daesh has degraded the political and moral authority of tribal leadership in Syria, they have been able to successfully infiltrate and recruit members from the

[371] I owe Carole O'Leary, an American anthropologist focusing on tribalism in Iraq and Syria, a debt of gratitude for her insights on the interactions between the locals and Daesh that she shared during her stay in Ankara (2013) and through the exchange of various ideas via email.

tribes. The tribes, with two exceptions, have been fully infiltrated by either Daesh or the regime. The two exceptions include some parts of the Shammar confederation of al-Hassakah and the Dara'a tribes on the Jordanian border, e.g. the Al Zoubi.[372] It has been strongly claimed that the rightful sheikhs have either been driven into exile, threatened into silence, or killed.[373] Daesh replaced the deposed sheikhs with criminals and outcasts from the tribes. These new tribal leaders brutalize Daesh opposition. In summary, the tribal system in Syria, the leadership in particular, has been fragmented except for the limited caveats presented above.

It should be also noted that these tribal leaders who believe that fighting against the regime is vital also demonstrate their pragmatic tendencies. Apart from worrying about their own positions, tribal sheikhs lead tribes with hundreds of thousands of members and must also take into consideration the future of the members of their tribes. Indeed, the statements of F. A. K. al-Jarba (personal communication, March 20, 2012), one of the leaders of the Shammar tribe serve as a summary of this. The sheikh says, “I cannot endanger my people by demonstrating a clear stance”. He does not want to expose his people to the likely oppression that would come from the regime if he were to take an opposing stance. He too did not believe that the regime would likely to fall soon. This pragmatic approach has been dominant among the tribes and also holds for Daesh.

As a result of all these reservations held by the elite who have the power to overthrow the regime, a majority believe that the regime would remain. Thus, they were hesitant to leave the regime. On the other hand, those who have already abandoned the regime have completely rejected it, and show no signs of returning. Indeed, even those closest to Bashar do not see an alternative. The lack of alternatives, the incompetence of the Syrian opposition, the de-politization of the Syrian uprising, the lack of political guidance, all contribute to the survival of Bashar al-Assad according to S. al-Taqi (personal communication, February 2, 2015).

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[372] Personal communications with Syrian Sheikh Falah Ajil Abdol Karim al-Jarba and some other Syrian tribal leaders for several times in Antep, Urfa, Tel-Abyad, Beirut and Istanbul between 2012 and 2015.

[373] Personal communication with Syrian Sheikh Falah Ajil Abdol Karim al-Jarba and some other Syrian tribal leaders for several times in Antep, Urfa, Tel-Abyad, Beirut and Istanbul between 2012 and 2015.

While many still support the regime, not all of those that support them can be considered servants of the regime. From my interviews, it is clear that though some of them wanted to withdraw their support, they were forced to stay. Interview data suggests it is extremely difficult to abandon the regime and flee to another country. A judge who defected from the regime said in his interview, “Everybody has family, brothers, sisters and people he/she loves. Let's assume that the person leaves, can he/she also bring his/her family to Turkey? Can they afford to live outside their country?” (personal communication, February 19, 2013). When we take into consideration the fact that a defector from the regime cannot stay inside the country, it can be said that a majority of people could not ensure their interests out of necessity. In this sense, in the interviews held with refugees, it was clear that each of them had great difficulty in making the decision to leave their country and all suffered from great hardships in their journeys to Turkey.

8.3.3.3 The Loyalty of the Security Services, not the Army

Just as in Egypt, in Syria too the security forces have played a decisive role in shaping the course of events. The power of regime stems from the Syrian military security complex and most senior officials in this complex are Nusayris. Some even argue that the main reason for the regime’s resilience is the sectarian nature of the army. According to Pierret, “the only independent variable you need to understand about the resilience of the Syrian regime is the kin-based and sectarian nature of its military and that all other purported factors are in fact dependent variables” (Abu Khalil, 2013). While the alliances of the Syrian Army, the intelligence services, paramilitary groups, and armed forces such as Hezbollah with the regime, and it has been these alliances that have obstructed the formation of possible ‘political opportunity structures’ for the opposition, they have also provided the segments fighting for the regime with many valuable opportunities. The regime participated in international negotiations and accepted suggestions for dialogue while simultaneously maintaining the same techniques of repression and violence.

Interview data suggests that when the Syrian uprisings began, Assad was unable to imagine that the conflict would continue to this degree. It seems that he was so confident that he would be able to overcome the problem. Furthermore the regime

believed that the people ought to be disciplined in a manner that would prevent them from defying the regime's authority. In A. al-Bash's words, "because the authority is powerful and the people are weak; there are many men in the regime who serve him (Assad) in order to obtain power and money, or even in an unreciprocated manner, just to attain proximity to power… This is the foundation of Syrian society (personal communication, February 21, 2013). It was believed that any demonstrations could be easily quelled and brought to an end. This philosophy and psychology is related principally to the military and security branches' power. S. Al-Taqi (personal communication, April 24, 2013) argues that these tactics come from Russian military doctrine whose goal is to break the will of the enemy. Thus, the fundamental aim of the violence is not to win the war. The goal of using such violence is to break the will of the opposition. This argument might explain why some of the massacres were so violent and despite the fact that they did not have any benefits on the military level. Therefore, the extreme violence perpetrated by the regime was meant to play a psychological role. Bashar al-Assad did not realize that he was moving further and further away from any chance of reconciling with Syrian society. His father achieved reconciliation not through politics, but through corrupt practices and by keeping everyone somehow dependent on the shadow economy which was guaranteeing their survival. It was for this reason that one needed to remain in the good favor of the regime. When Bashar broke this sort of relationship between the regime and the society, it was obvious that it would be hard to recreate this. Hafez al-Assad was able to secure the support of different social groups, even during the Hama events.[374] A social fractionalization to such an extent was not been previously witnessed in Syria. One should remember that Hafez al-Assad went to many pains to explain that he was not responsible for the incidents in Hama and refuse to confess that he was involved in the massacre of Hama. Even he pushed practically Kurds and Bedouins responsible for these massacres. In this regard, another mistake that Bashar made was that he pushed his people, the Alawites, into committing such crimes in different cities of Syria via Shabbiha groups or Special Forces, since he could not completely trust the loyalty of the Syrian army (O. al-Kamal, personal communication, January 8, 2013). Although he couldn't obtain the support of Sunni factions inside the army, he absolutely needed to secure the support of the Alawites. Moreover, as indicated in

[374] Please see chapter V

Chapter V, the majority of important officers and commanders in the army are Alawites and all the field commanders are Alawites (F. Amro, personal communication, November 6, 2014). Up until 2013 the Defense Secretary was a Sunni and the one before him was a Christian who was murdered. However, the interview data suggests the position of the secretary of defense was just a facade.

Out of 50 thousand military officers in the Syrian army, 39 thousand were Alawites. Therefore, since its transformation into a sectarian war, it seems that we should not expect to witness any serious disintegration on the Alawite side of the army. They have played a role in continuing the crisis, of course with the help of Iranian army and militias (Smyth, 2015: 37-47). In other words, it might not be an army by definition, but it obvious at least that it has turned into a militia that defends only Alawites (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

Several strategies have been employed to ensure that the Sunni segment of the army, which provides a majority of the privates, do not abandon their posts. Privates saw their leave of absence revoked and their discharge dates suspended to a later date as a precautionary measure ("Syrian army soldier", 2015). The military's only news comes from the partisan state media, leaving them in the dark as to what is really happening. As a result, for some time the military was used as a coherent actor to quell the protests. A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) explains: "Official Syrian media is the only media. Therefore the privates have no idea of what is going on outside. If any soldier was permitted to visit his family and see what had taken place, he wouldn't return. Which is why those that do learn, defect". For many Syrians, the explanation that the Ba'ath regime has been trying to placate a rebellion is not satisfactory. What is happening in Syria is a consciously planned massacre or "collective punishment" in Pierret's words (Abu Khalil, 2013). It is no different than the Serbian treatment of the Bosnians or the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. Interview data suggests that at times, even Israel has treated the Palestinians with more fairness and mercy than how the Ba'ath regime is treating its own people. For many Syrians it is obvious that the Ba'ath regime never identified itself with the Syrians or valued the idea drawing its legitimacy from the population. For Pierret, "the legitimacy of the regime is inversely proportional to the level of violence it

needs to use to ensure its survival; this is a highly illegitimate regime in the eyes of most Syrians" (Abu Khalil, 2013).

8.3.3.3.1 The Exhausted Army

As of 2015, the Ba'ath regime is unable to control Syria and is experiencing great difficulties, especially in rural areas. Even for soldiers of the regime who are located in these areas, the situation is becoming progressively worse. Furthermore, there has been a marked increase in the number of high-ranking officers that have defected from the army. In fact, local sources confirm that the number of defectors is much higher than what has been reflected in the media. It is also clear that during the attacks on the town of Baba Amr located in Homs, a large number of Soldiers defected from the Syrian Armed Forces and joined the FSA, notably in groups as opposed to individually (F. Amro, personal communication, November 6, 2013).

Many reports and observers indicate that the Syrian army is exhausted morally and that it has lost its will to fight (Abu Khalil, 2013). Most of the massacres and sieges have been perpetrated by the Fourth Brigade under the command of Maher al-Assad and forces close to the Assad family or by the Shabiha militia, known for their loyalty to the regime and their Alawite origin (Abu Khalil, 2013). It is estimated that only one third of the army was operationalized in combat missions since the onset of the uprisings (F. Amro, personal communication, November 6, 2013). Once the uprisings in Syria began, Shabbiha was transformed into the armed gangs employed by the regime to suppress the people. It is also alleged that Shabbiha was organized by Namir Assad, cousin of President Hafez al-Assad, and led by Emir al-Assad, Munzer al-Assad, Fawaz al-Assad, Ali al-Assad and Hafez al-Assad (junior). It is expressed that the organization deems itself above the law and has engaged in human trafficking, smuggling and robbery. This is reportedly due to the unconditional support the regime has afforded to the group, behind closed doors. The Shabbiha militia is primarily located in Syria's coastal regions. It is also claimed that Shabbiha receives training from Hezbollah and incites violence with its intimidating slogans.[375]

[375] Informal interviews with several Syrians along the Turkish border.

It is clear that there is a split among the military elites. However, interview data suggests that Iran has been successfully filling the vacuum left by disputes among the Syrian elite.[376] The meeting in Damascus in July 18, 2012 ("Syria: Fresh", 2012) where the director of intelligence was killed, was seen as an action meant to prevent a military coup and Iran was suspected to be the perpetrator of the murder.[377] This example is enough to show how Iran eliminates the disputes in the military and fills the holes with its own men. Moreover, in spite of the fact that there is a complete degeneration and decomposition which has only been furthered by the policies implemented by Bashar al-Assad following the split among the security wings, Assad still insists on trying to keep the state functioning. For instance, the Assad regime was originally paying around 70 percent of the salaries in the country with money coming from Iran (S. al-Taqi, personal communication, April 24, 2013). According to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), the officials of Hezbollah and Iran knew that once the opposition forces approached *Kifr Susre* or made it within 3 kilometers of the Presidential Palace in Damascus, that only they could save the regime from being toppled. They also knew that their militias were the only ones capable of continuing the war with the fall in morale of the regime's defunct army. Interview data also suggests that in order to implement the plan *Shiite Crescent,* assembled in Tehran, Iran needed to form a corridor between Lebanon, Iraq and Syria.[378]

Stated briefly, although over time the army lost its ability to consolidate its power, from the very beginning Assad had an armed force at his disposal that could suppress the protests. This capacity has not declined thanks to foreign assistance and the existence of different Special Forces and paramilitary groups. In other words, the regime does not currently have any difficulties in compensating for the army's presence. The fact that Alawite officers and several warlords view the conflict as a fight for their very survival, that military powers such as Iran or Hezbollah have willingly compensated for the gaps, and that factions of the opposition have used armed conflict against themselves, has meant that Assad could continue to use hard

[376] It is fair to argue that this is one of the fundamental findings of the interview data.
[377] This was one of the claims raised during some interviews.
[378] With regards to this point, I conducted interviews not only with Syrians but also with several other Iraqi and Lebanese Sunni elites during the field trips for other projects in December 2014-February 2015.

power elements in a coherent and coordinated manner. His alliance with the security elite (especially within the military) has been badly damaged due to defections and military morale is equally low. However, one can observe an alliance between the regime and the armed forces named above. This creates a 'political opportunity structure' against the opposition and for the regime.

8.3.4 Fragmented and Visionless Opposition Groups

As expressed by B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014) who has been a senior member of the Syrian opposition for many years, the Syrian regime by its very nature has obstructed the development of communication, dialogue, free expression of ideas and political action in Syria. Therefore, according to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), it has prevented the rise of opposition groups that are ideologically and politically aligned, with strong and stable social bases. It has marginalized dissidents, sent them into exile or condemned them to live underground. The opposition arguably gave a relatively more serious and effective performance in the beginning (1960s and 1970s). However, during the process of last four decades, old politicians have either died, taken up trade or else given up altogether after 40 years of struggling and have nothing to show for it (A. al-Bash, personal communication, February 21, 2013). Some have gone abroad to leave politics and become businessmen. In short, the people could not form proper bonds with opposition leaders and the leaders could not form stable bonds with them (Sayigh, 2013; Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 183). According to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014) this also applies to the current Syrian opposition.

Nevertheless, the initial move by the Syrian opposition to form the Syrian National Council (SNC) was an important development (B. Ghailoun, personal communication, November 23, 2014). The Council has been the face and address of the revolution, representing it on the world stage (Sayigh, 2013: 7-14). In the beginning the Syrian revolution evoked great enthusiasm inside Syria, in the Arab world and throughout the globe, leading to the formation of the *Friends of Syrian People Group* which is made up of over a hundred countries. The Group helped pass the UN General Assembly decision (Feb 6, 2012) that called on Assad to step down and supported the demands of the revolution. However, the international community

has been hesitant in taking steps against Assad as well as Tehran, which has intervened in the conflict from the very early days of the revolution. This resulted in several new phenomena, such as an increase in the level of barbaric acts committed by regime militias as well as the displacement of millions of Syrians and the growing issue of Syrian refugees. Later, the conflict took on a sectarian nature and the number of al-Qaeda type groups grew exponentially. The Syrian opposition, after abandoning the peaceful nature of the revolution and arming themselves, failed to secure the necessary support that would help it compete with the military, political and social developments in the conflict (B. Ghailoun, personal communication, November 23, 2014). The major hurdle in this context was the failure of the opposition to obtain arms and financial support from friendly countries for the battalions that had defected the regime (White, Tabler & Zelin, 2013: 20-25). Another hurdle was the need for continued humanitarian aid for the people. Immediately afterwards, with the rise of Daesh which played a crucial role in hindering civilian regime forces and providing support to the regime, the Arab world and international community re-evaluated their approach to the events. For many people, including those directly inside Syria, the aims and goals of the revolution are becoming increasingly suspect. As a result, the revolution has been marginalized and is now viewed not as a people's movement, but as a terrorist movement. This perception has tarnished the revolution's image, making Tehran's and Damascus's lives easier. The weakness of the opposition and the negative repercussions of this weakness in the media have certainly played an important part in hurting the revolution's image and causing confusion in terms of public opinion. A chasm has formed between the opposition, the revolutionary forces in the field and the activists that are aligned to the revolution. A similar situation occurred among the opposition's allies and representatives. In B. Ghailoun's words, "hopes that the conflict would come to a swift end were abandoned due to the hesitation of the US and the scheduling of the *Friends of the Syrian People Meeting"* (personal communication, November 23, 2014). A contradiction exists between the poor performance of the opposition and the fight on the ground.

According to opposition member Fayez Sare (2014), another reason why the Assad regime was successful was because "the opposition was already lacking in quality and quantity". However it failed especially in forming political consensus and a

practice of fighting the regime despite agreeing that the regime ought to be toppled. In B. Ghailoun's words "it is clear that the joint theme of all opposition groups was to topple this totalitarian regime; however the justified polemic regarding the weakness and divisiveness of the Syrian opposition is becoming louder" (personal communication, November 23, 2014). As indicated above, this failure and weakness meant that radical groups could seep inside Syria and gain new ground.

It should be noted that, to date, the most fundamental concern of many actors and the most important obstacle to a successful revolution is the fragmented opposition structure in Syria (B. Kodmani, personal communication, May 27, 2014).[379] The Muslim Brotherhood (Lefevre, 2013: 174-200), the Syrian National Council, the Local Coordination Committees, the FSA and the tribes are the first actors that come to mind who would play a role in the future of Syria. Although the Syrian National Council hosts many different groups, it is still far from being the only actor to bring its various components to agreement.

The 'non-military Syrian opposition' initially was organized along two axes: Local Coordination Committees (Yassin-Kassab & al-Shami, 2016: 57-76) which organize activities within the country and the *Syrian National Council* which organizes the formation of international awareness abroad and works to gather support for the dissidents, which it has been successful in doing to a certain extent. The FSA and the local tribes were the actors struggling to find a place for themselves in the equation. The FSA emerged as the most powerful armed group in Syria (White, Tabler & Zelin, 2013), working with limited means on the basis of defense, in close contact with the Syrian people, protecting them from security forces and paramilitary organizations such as Shabiha. The FSA used to be the most popular group in the eyes of public, however, local groups found that the Syrian National Council underestimated the FSA even in the early phases of its establishment. Foreign forces did not support arming the opposition and the FSA's decentralized structure has been influential in this underestimation.

[379] Even after the uprisings began, extreme fragmentation and even atomization continues as noted in Kodmani's speech at ECFR meeting in Copenhagen, May 27, 2014.

In fact, the FSA implements a decentralized structure, constituted of retired or defected soldiers and civilian groups. For Sayigh (2013: 9), the FSA was the largest rebel group initially, but also the least structured or cohesive one. In the beginning these armed brigades obtained weapons by selling the jewelry of their wives and mothers and even their cars (M. Barmu, personal communication, January 5, 2013). It had received the people's support as a mobile entity. However as political funding of the brigades entered the picture, the people began to have doubts (F. Amro, personal communication, November 6, 2013). Interview data suggests that foreign assistance was provided mostly to buy allegiances as opposed to supporting the revolution. In B. Kodmani's words:

> When the movement became militarized, this brought into the country massive foreign money and with it multiple foreign agendas and ideologies that were alien to the movement itself and to Syrian society, particularly the radical Salafi Islam with the Jihadi ideology. It was really the foreign support that came into the country and brought the radical groups who kidnapped the popular uprising. Meanwhile, those who held the democratic ideas found no sources of support to continue the fight against the regime. These forces were left alone to weaken and shrink (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

The people who actually deserved support were provided with almost nothing or received insufficient support. In this sense, during the interviews conducted along the Syrian border, the FSA officers have regularly stated that it wasn't enough that the aid reached the person inside Syria responsible for distributing the aid (personal communications, January 31, 2013; F. Amro, personal communication, November 6, 2013). In that sense, A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) stated that:

> There was a serious lack in the distribution of aid (armed and humanitarian). I don't know if this was on purpose. Or perhaps mismanagement. There was a missing link between the supporters and the brigades. We don't know, perhaps theft?

The FSA has been successful in gaining control of certain military positions, however it has thus far failed to obtain the most critical positions. Syria's major

airports are still under the military's control and only two small airports have been 'liberated', the Taftanaz and Jarrah airports. Additionally, the large military airports remain under the control of the military (Ghoussoub, 2013).

The Syrian war is lasting much longer than expected, and has worsened as a result of the FSA's lack of arms. The supplies that they have been able to take from the regime were limited and this dependence on local weaponry has negatively affected morale. The living conditions have also become a burden. As one FSA commander (personal communication, January 31, 2013) explains:

> What will a soldier in the FSA eat? Does he have a family? Doe he belong to a tribe? He has no salary, his family isn't secure. This is an additional problem. I could last a month, 5 months, 10 months, 1 year, 2 years. How long could I continue to fight? The morale is also weakened.

The regime's military force continues to receive compensation while FSA members have been left helpless and without means. On top of this, FSA members are subject to specific social and family pressures which create fertile ground for increasing support for radical groups who have the means to provide for fighters. Radical groups have thus strengthened their ranks with their ability to provide a salary to those who fight with them, present a more organized structure, fight with more effective and powerful weapons and secure the support of desperate people.

One of main problems in the Syrian opposition is the lack of coordination. While members of the SNC cannot maintain healthy communication with local groups, in the same way, local groups cannot act in a coordinated fashion. It is therefore impossible to form a national organization. In M. Barmu's words, who lived inside Syria till 2012 as an oppositional political leader, "there is an internal opposition and an external one. There are big problems with regards to the external one. They are not directly connected to the forces inside. These are individuals who couldn't set foot inside Syria for the past 20-30 years (personal communication, January 5, 2013). In the same vein S. al-Taqi (personal communication, April 24, 2013) states that "nobody outside of Syria has any power within Syria. Not the Muslim Brotherhood, not anybody else. Bashar was very much successful in decapitating and preventing any level of leadership.

Another problem is that the needs and desires of different groups have become prominent. Many Syrians without a significant social base tried to portray themselves as true representatives of the Syrians. M. Barmu (personal communication, January 5, 2013) states that "a Syrian man comes and says: I am a revolutionary, I can make decisions on the street inside Syria, yet they cannot". Thus, there has been certain individuals who claim to work towards solving problems, but instead they talk with foreign countries, spread misinformation and gain prominence. According to A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) these sort of people are searching support for just themselves. In short, certain individuals want to make personal gains by portraying themselves as revolutionaries. This has shaken the support of international actors for the opposition and has meant a declining supply of aid. Local factors too do not have full confidence in the SNC (O. al-Kamal, personal communication, January 8, 2013). It is clear too that there are contradicting opinions in the Council. The opposition in Istanbul, for example, has a slightly different organizational structure than the SNC and they lack a clear leadership.[380]

Even the SNC, which can be defined as the most organized opposition group, seems to have serious trouble deciding what action to take. They have appointed many people with fairly low political experience to different positions and the efforts of some to come to power have reduced the effectiveness of the SNC (Sayigh, 2013: 3). For example, appointing members who do not speak foreign languages to the foreign relations branch has greatly harmed the council whose greatest goal is to raise international awareness. The perception of B. Ghailoun, the first head of SNC, by some local factors as an agent of France also introduces some questions about the legitimacy of the Council. B. Ghailoun is allegedly accused not only of being an agent of France ("Syria's opposition", 2012), but has been known to introduce his own ideas as those of the Syrian people. B. Kodmani, first spokeswoman of SNC was also allegedly accused of being an agent of Israel.

Though the SNC consists of 310 members and is said to be led by the MB, it is clear that this is not the truth (Sayigh, 2013: 7). Another point to bear in mind, is that the

[380] My field work observation.

MB is the leading factor among others constituting Syria's traditional opposition. Even though MB[381] were involved in attempts to organize foreign opposition (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013), (e.i SNC), they have played no major role within Syria (Lefevre, 2013: 194; Abu-Khalil, 2013).

In order for the opposition to be effective, in other words, for Assad to go, some pre-conditions should have been met. First, as stated above, the opposition should have been recovered from the fragmented structure. Second, the mobilization of the middle class was the decisive factor in terms of the level of success of the opposition. Because the middle class, if convinced that the regime would fall, would have changed its position and gave its support to the opposition. Yet, under the ruling conditions, many minority groups (Kurds, Nusairis, and Druze) identify(ed) stability with the regime. These two conditions are contingent with a third one, which is an international collective mind as a support for the opposition.

In a final analysis, the opposition forces outside the country, which have been dormant for years were shocked to find out that a revolution was taking place without any effort on the part of the opposition (H. Hashemete, personal communication, April 24, 2013). They themselves had undertaken many efforts to do so, but had failed to get people out on the streets. However, this time the people had risen up with no effort on the opposition's part. The people who would not walk behind them previously were leading the revolution. This meant limited interest and support from local and organically formed groups towards those outside the country trying to portray themselves as leaders of the revolution.

In Syria there exists a mass movement made up of masses of people. However, because the official opposition (SNC, SC etc.) did not have a strong foothold on the ground, they have not been able to convince the local elements to support their cause, thus making people more inclined to support radical groups. In fact, armed radical groups have been able to provide the desperate population with some form of relief when no one else was able to help them. In Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami's words "tormented, bereaved, dispossessed, the Syrian people turned more intensely to

[381] For an outstanding account on Syrian Muslim Brotherhood see Lefevre (2013).

religion (2016: 109). The opposition, which is in dialogue with the West, can only provide the coordination of humanitarian aid and meet some of the needs of Syrian refugees in their host countries.[382] Its effect on the ground has been very limited. In other words they just "represent rather than lead" (Sayigh, 2013: 3). This was more considerable in the beginning however at the end of the day the real actors in the field are *Ahrar al-Sham*, *Jabhat al-Nusra*, *Daesh*, and other radical groups.

8.3.5. The Position of External Actors

> *Where do Syrian people go? The regime encircled everywhere, world governments do not support the opposition and Arab countries just keep on watching (A Syrian refugee, personal communication, January 31, 2013)*

The lack of responsible management of the Syrian conflict by regional and international actors, the lack of proper support and strategy for protecting the civilian population and helping Syrian nationalist oriented groups created despair on the ground. Many desperate fighters joined ISIS when they were literally hungry (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Taking into consideration the number of casualties and the destruction wrought by the regime, interview data claims that international actors should have acted effectively to help Syrian people and found a solution. In the words of B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), the crisis cannot be solved because of "the structure of the current Syrian regime and its components and the relative inaction of international society". According to him, the fact that the UN Security Council did not unequivocally fulfill its responsibilities for the Syrian society is one of the fundamental issues (personal communication, November 23, 2014). In a survey conducted with Syrians residing in refugee camps in Turkey, a majority of people interviewed attributed the unresolved crisis to the stances taken by international actors. 74.4 % of the Syrian refugees think that the reason the Assad

[382] Most of the NC's "bureaus and committees have remained largely on paper, with the significant exception of its Aid Coordination Unit" (Sayigh, 2013: 15).

regime has survived for so long is because of the 'foreign support' that it receives (Güçer et al, 2013: 53).[383] In any case, no clear position was established by international governing bodies with the purpose of helping Syrian people. International and regional actors refrained from acting, alleging that the Syrian opposition was too weak to provide a sound alternative to the Assad regime and that there were no other alternatives. On the other hand, the Syria-Iran-Russia axis has been working to lay the foundation for maintaining the crisis situation.

One of the main reasons behind the failure of the Syrian opposition movement is the inability of the international community to formulate a collective mentality and related policy. This problem arises as a result of the general issue of 'regional openness' in the Middle East, to use the expression from the literature (Pyrs, 2010: 496-499). Regional openness illustrates to what extent a region coincides with the field of interests of a global hegemon and big powers, and with what frequency these actors intervene in the regional balances. In this regard, the Middle East region is at the center of global power politics, and therefore its level of regional openness is very high. Syria is one of the few Middle Eastern countries that demonstrate a high level of 'regional openness'. Many actors get involved in Syrian affairs and there is a general failure in achieving a common mindset and support which would consequently create a political opportunity structure for the opposition movement due to conflicting interests. As Sare (2014) says, this is one of the fundamental reasons why Assad remains in office. Indeed, regional and international involvements in Syria, whose gates were somehow opened by the Assad regime, provided the regime with further opportunities to survive. Therefore, Syria finds itself at a crossroads. How the future of the country and the social movement has been and will be shaped is more than just a product of Syria's internal dynamics and involves the greater regional and global community. Geopolitical importance of Syria as a pivotal country, in the sense that:

> Its alliances and its choices in foreign policy, have an impact that reverberates across the region. This dimension is both a blessing and a curse. In this particular context, it played out as a curse because the regime was able to mobilize the pivotal value of the country for regional and international actors in

[383] The same survey releases that 11 % of the Syrian refugees see the lack of unity among the opposition as the main obstacle to the fall of the government.

> order to suppress the movement and deny any rights to the people (B. Kodmani, personal communication, November 13, 2014).

When it comes to international law, it is impossible to implement when there is a lack of political will. The lack of political will in the Syrian crisis is clear in the length of time it took the UN to denounce the violence perpetrated by the Syrian regime ("UN Falls", 2011; "U.N. Security Council issues", 2011). In order to establish the necessary political will for change in Syria, interview data suggests that the global community and its political leaders should have been made more aware of the situation on the ground. According to interviewees, Iran, Russia and China played an enormous role in delaying the resolution of the Syrian problem. They also assert that the West, Turkey and the Arabs also have great responsibilities to the Syrian people. Ali Bakeer (personal communication, February 19, 2013), a defected judge from Aleppo argued that:

> Although Russia and China are the countries which vetoed the resolution to the problem under the umbrella of the UN, it was the other actors, especially the West, which have refrained from establishing a collective will, causing postponement of the problem.

In other words, it is suggested that while Assad supporters, like China, Russia, and Iran prevent any obstacles from hindering Assad, those who claim to support the people are clearly confused as to which is the best course of action. While the Syrian regime has continuously massacred Syrians for the last four years, Russia continues to provide military and political support to the regime by deploying warships in the Eastern Mediterranean and Iran provides weapon, diplomatic and staff support to the Ba'athist regime. Interview data suggests that despite all this support, international society has put down many proposals to help and arm the opposition, despite their continued declarations of support for the Syrian people. It is clear that concrete progress cannot be made, even on humanitarian issues such as treating the wounded or transporting refugees to safe areas. The political support from Russia has effectively tied the hands of the UN Security Council from taking action against the Assad regime's policies. The logistical support from Iran adds additional political, economic, military and intelligence dimensions to the conflict. Additionally, Russian experts, Iranian soldiers, Lebanese Hezbollah and militiamen coming from Iraq

contribute to the regime militarily (Sare, 2014; Also see Symth, 2015: 48-54). It is widely acknowledged that one of the main reasons why the regime and Iran are able to get away with such violence lies in their success in paralyzing the UN Security Council and Iran's alliance with Russia in passivizing decisions concerning the crisis in Syria. According to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014), "if the Security Council had not been paralyzed like this, the Syrian regime could not have survived the heroic resistance of the Syrian people who sacrificed numerous members in the name of freedom, independence and human rights". He also argues that "today, everybody knows well that the most basic factors underlying in the crisis and the continuation of the tragedy are great political, ideological, military, financial and media support of Iran, and also perpetual weaponry assistance from Russia" (personal communication, November 23, 2014).

In addition, the attempts made by international actors to negotiate with Assad, such as Kofi Annan's mediation, have landed the Syrian middle class in a difficult situation. Though they do not want to support Assad, they are forced to support him because they are not convinced that Assad would fall, leaving them in so-called purgatory. This is reflected in a negative way in the motivation of the opposition, preventing the emergence of a collective will for change that needs to come from within. In this sense, an analogy made by a Syrian activist (personal communication, January 31, 2013) is noteworthy:

> Insisting on dialogue and negotiation proposals, provides support to a patient with brain death to live tied to a machine. It should be definitely taken into account that there is an important group who will join the ranks of the opposition when it is fully understood that international actors have given up the regime.

8.3.5.1 The Role of External Actors: The Case of Iran

According to B. Ghailoun (personal communication, November 23, 2014) Iran plays perhaps the most critical role in the Syrian crisis. Particularly, the military support sent by Iran clearly demonstrates their continuous ties to the Syrian army. It was widely acknowledged by the interviewees that from the beginning Iran worked to prevent any dissolution in the Syrian army. The collapse of several regimes in the region brought on a relaxation of the system's control mechanisms which provided

more room for Iran to maneuver (R. Hamadany, personal communication, January 10, 2015). In this environment, Iran strives to further extend its already active influence through an intensive propaganda program meant to influence public opinion. Generally, Iran is not adversely affected by regional instability and sometimes even consciously aims to breed instability.

Harshly criticizing what happened in Bahrain, from the beginning Iran has not hesitated to describe events in Syria as Western conspiracies (F. Attia, personal communication, May 27, 2014). Tehran characterizes the events in Syria as similar to the riot created in 2009 in Iran. Iran claims that activists are working for foreign powers and received orders from abroad to overthrow the Syrian regime which has consistently resisted the regional plans of the United States and Israel. Providing support for the Ba'ath Party to suppress ‘rebellions’, Iran conducts intensive propaganda campaigns to further its arguments.

Interview data suggests that Iran would experience big losses along if a regime change were to occur in Syria. Some say that a regime change would be the biggest loss for Iran since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. In A. Bakeer’s words, “if the regime in Syria falls, this may lead to the dramatic decline in Iran's influence in the Arab region starting from Palestine, passing through Lebanon, Iraq, and the Gulf regions and ending within its own territory” (personal communication, 2012; F. Attai, personal communication, May 27, 2014; R. Hamadany, personal communication, January 10, 2015). Every single interviewee, without any exception, stressed that the primary objective of Iran is to protect the Shi’ite axis established in the region. Following the 2003 war, Iraq, in addition to Lebanon, has become part of the Shi’ite zone of influence. It is widely acknowledged that the Shi’ite axis is a strategic and political area of influence created to maximize the interests of Iran, not about creating cooperation along sectarian lines. Therefore, according to one of the interviewees, Syria is “life and death” issue for Iran:

> A change of authoritarian rule in Syria can be useful for the region and Syrian Muslims, but will not be good at all for Iran. Under these circumstances, Iran should not be expected to allow the Syrian regime, its strategic ally, to fall easily. In fact, this is the reason that Iran is one of the most fundamental factors

> causing the months-long struggle to fail to produce a result (A former Iraqi governor, January 10, 2015).

It is common knowledge that Iran supports the Ba'athist regime and that the regime in Syria uses troops sent by Iran to put down uprisings. Syrian locals know that many Iranian officers have been given civilian identities by the Syrian government and that they carry out their tasks in civilian clothes. In other words, this information can be easily confirmed by civilian observations. For instance A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) argues that:

> Hezbollah and Iran have been in Syria since the beginning of the peaceful revolution. What I myself observed was that they suppressed the protests at the beginning, but not everywhere. Though, they had armed components even before the crisis turned into an armed conflict. Most of them were located in Homs and Damascus countryside close to Lebanon.

In short, Tehran maintains its position in ignoring and even openly supporting the suffering in Syria today, as was also the case with the 1982 massacre in Hama, siding with the regime and offering technical, financial and military aid to the Baathist government from the very beginning. It is clear that Iran is working to further its political goals and expand its sphere of influence in the region. According to R. Hamadany (personal communication, January 10, 2015), a former Iraqi general:

> Acting in accordance with its realpolitik, Iran conducts its own policy and makes efforts aimed at increasing its power and influence in the region without getting caught up in emotional drifts. Most of the time, ideological identity can get ahead of the Islamic sensibility.

Iran, not satisfied with simply providing armed support for the regime, is using different methods to increase its influence. In this context, interviewees frequently discussed Iran's attempts to take advantage of the situation and increase its policy of Shi'ization in the region. Despite their efforts, there are only a few successful examples of their policy in Syria, such as the Shi'ization of 25% of a tribe located near Aleppo, and the whole of a small town near Qamishli (K. al-Jarba, personal communication, March 20, 2012). Iranian Shiite missionaries are trying to bring people into the fold using coercive methods. For example, in an effort to convince

the poor Sunni Arab and Sunni Kurdish groups, Iran provides financial resources to those in need (O'Leary & Heras, 2011). Interview data suggests that Iran has been using the Shi'a card to conceal its attempts to attain Persian political objectives. In other words, it is trying to expand its political sphere of influence, using religion as a tool.

Iran's stance via Syria is difficult to change. However, this does not mean that it is impossible. Interview data suggests that in the case that a solid solution was presented by the West, Iran might withdraw its support from Assad, if Russia could be persuaded. At this point, the withdrawal of Iran's political support for Assad would not result in ineffectiveness of Iran's influence in this country. This would be a huge loss for Iran, but interview data suggests that Iran has prepared alternative strategies for the long-term, taking into account all possibilities (H. Mukhlis, personal communication, January 10, 2015). In this respect, even if Assad is overthrown, Iran will be able to maintain its presence in Syria. In addition, Iran has already established relations with various opposition groups to ensure its position in a post-Assad Syria (F. Attai, personal communication, May 27, 2014)

The stance adopted by international actors was one of the basic reasons why Syria did not experience a result similar to Egypt, with a leadership change occurring in a short period of time. Interview data and scholarly works suggest that the West either does not see the facts or does not want to see them. It seems to be confused as to what to do and focuses more on the issue of terrorism. Russia, on the other hand, sees the crisis as a conflict between itself and the West. Furthermore, Iran, as a crucial actor in the equation, is already involved and it sees the Syrian crisis as an issue related to its own ontology. Whether we are looking at stances adopted by each international and regional actor, the West's reluctance to solve the crisis, Russian political and logistical support, or Iran's sway in the region and its unconditional support to the regime, each of these factors have constituted important 'political opportunity structures' for Assad regime.

8.4 From the Imagined to Reality

In spite of all the above-mentioned propaganda strategies, the general perception of the Syrian people about the future of their country bears great importance. The country will be rebuilt and governed by Syrian society and for this reason the way society assesses the crisis provides analysts with clues as to what the future of Syria will be. The research conducted for this thesis in the Syrian refugee camps in 2013 regarding the future of Syria supports this argument (Güçer et al, 31-59). The Syrian people maintained their common sense for a while despite provocations and propaganda from the regime and this was a point worth considering. In spite of the efforts of the Ba'ath party which seeks to distort social harmony, 84.5% of Syrian people did not believe in the possibility of a sectarian war in the post-Assad era, while about 80% indicated they could live with other minorities. The same sentiments were also apparent in the percentage of people who did not believe Syria would disintegrate (78.9%). 60% of Syrian people would like a democratic regime, proving that the objectives and claims of Ba'ath were not accepted by society. Evidently there were differences between the opinions of those who took shelter in Turkey and those who had to or preferred to stay in Syria in the midst of the conflict. Nevertheless, the refugees in Turkey are witnesses and victims of the conflict; therefore, their perceptions might be similar. While no follow up survey were conducted, a general change in attitude has occurred and people began to talk about a real sectarian war during my later visits (2014, 2015) to Amman and the Turkish cities along the Syrian border.[384] This demonstrates that positive expectations among the Syrian people have decreased and that the regime's propaganda campaign which aimed to counter-frame the crisis was successful. One of the Syrian political figures, S. al-Taqi (personal communication, February 2, 2015), confessed that the methods used by Assad regime have destroyed the social harmony in Syria and turned neighbors within Syria into enemies:

> I am very much secular but I am come from a Sunni background. Alawites were living with us, and we never thought of them in this way [committing crimes against Sunnis]. But suddenly to discover that my neighbor was using his power to get this gun and kill me. It was a very powerful awakening. This was a big mistake.

[384] My latest visit to the region was in January 2015.

Thus, ‘political opportunity structures’ which might be recognized under normal circumstances were unable to be recognized. Those ‘political opportunities’ that were perceived in the beginning slowly disappeared as the crisis deepened. This demonstrates that ‘political opportunity structures’ can quickly change in the case of a crisis. As the conflict wears on and the destruction continues, people affected have become more likely to lose their common sense, and it will take a much longer time to establish stability in the upcoming period. Accordingly, the relevant reports indicate that in the case that a solution is not reached, 10 million people, or half of Syrian population, will remain without aid as of 2016.

In short, the counter-framing strategies utilized by Syrian regime are based on two strategies: to create confusion and to buy time. Military power has been applied in order to suppress the opposition. The regime has drawn out the process in order to accustom Syrians to such conflict and has militarized the problem by using violence as a solution. Such actions have provided the regime with an opportunity to transform its claims into actual reality because the regime thought it could impose a *fait accompli* on international community via these two elements. We see that ‘political opportunity structures’, which were in fact expected to emerge for the opposition movement, emerged instead for the counter-movement. Interview data suggests that the main reason behind this result is the evident difference in power between the regime and the public. The outcome is also related to the reactions of international actors. The overt support of Russia and Iran for Assad, the lack of an agreement between international actors and their hesitant attitudes regarding intervention, and the lack of protection for the Syrian people can be considered factors in the regime’s ability to continue using such violent responses.

In short, the Assad regime has had a clear strategy for countering the uprising since the very beginning. It used strategies such as violence, propaganda and promises of reform. In fact, the common objective of all these strategies was to gain time and suppress the opposition. Assad was able to buy time and prevent the success of opposition, though not able to entirely suppress the opposition. As a result, Syria now finds itself in a stalemate and has been labeled a failed state by the international community. Even if Assad and the recently emerged radical elements, such as *Daesh*

and *Jabha al-Nusra* persist, consistency, order and security seem impossible in the mid-term. The ultimate result of what is happening in Syria is best described in al-S. Taqi's words "we [the opposition, revolutionaries, challengers] are kidnapped by revenge and his loyal camp [Alawites, Christians, businessmen etc.] is kidnapped by fear (personal communication, February 2, 2015).

This section will conclude by conveying how A. al-Bash systematically explains the main reasons behind Assad's ability to remain in power. For many years A. al-Bash has held executive and legislative positions inside Syria both as an MP and as an administrator in the bureaucracy. Additionally, he is an important member of the al-Sade tribe and is therefore familiar both with the social structure and dynamics of state institutions inside Syria. His arguments serve both to summarize the narrative above and to reiterate the main arguments of this study as a whole. They are important as they show that the 'political opportunity structures' and 'framing approaches' have worked in favor of the regime and not the opposition in the Syrian case. It does not mean that the political opportunites were emerged for the regime; rather it means that the people on the streets were not able to recognize the available political opportunity structures or there emerged no political opportunity structures for the protesters.

According to A. Bash's statements, there are five main reasons that Assad is still in power. The main reason for the regime's survival is its tightly knit structure (coherent); and moreover its history of implementing violent tactics against the Syrian people. Secondly, the lack of international support in Syria and the opposition's lack of allies and motivation are important factors.

A. al-Bash's third factor is the weakness of the opposition, who are weakly organized and unable to present a coherent plan. Therefore, A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) argues they were unable to go beyond being simply a formality and most of the actors in opposition are not truly oppositional:

> They [not all] take their positions as a career, to make personal profits… It is surprising that they work for the opposition. These people are actually tradesmen (particularly the external opposition), they have companies, hold wealth in European countries. Under the (pretense) of being an opposition

> they have come to take over the cause in Syria. They do not want an end to the conflict. Because they benefit from the persistence of the conflict. I know these people by name but I do not wish to express it.

A. al-Bash adds the spontaneous and clear mobilization of the Syrian people as a fourth factor. According to him, different aspects of the society stood in rebellion: "Farmers are rising, workers are rising… they are all rising." However, A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) states that these groups are "complete rookies who have not even witnessed any political movement for 40 years let alone had first-hand experience". As is stressed above, these people started out their protest as a peaceful movement. However, the regime quelled this peaceful movement and slaughtered many. A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013), who was still inside Syria during these peaceful protests were underway continues to say:

> The regime cruelly clamped down on these protests with the idea that it was trying to preserve the country's unity. Therefore a third group who sided neither with the regime nor the revolution emerged. These people are perverts and robbers. They steal, they kill, commit crimes. This third group has ruined Syria with its dirt and contamination. The regime on the other hand is busy squashing the revolution. While the regime is spending its energies on the revolution and revolutionaries, these gangs are running amok in the country. These groups are armed and they are using the revolution as an excuse.

A. al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) cites international support for the regime as the final and decisive factor, bearing parallels with the findings of this study. According to him, world leaders not only fall short of supporting the Syrian people, but on the contrary support the regime:

> Large states support the regime with monetary and moral support, even armed support. For example, Iran, Russia China… America and of course the EU countries also support the regime, knowingly or not. Even not supporting the revolution is in and of itself a kind of support for the regime. Had they supported the Syrian revolution, things may have played out much differently.

Although the regime has succeeded in fooling certain international actors such as the US or Europe, it has not achieved in gaining full acceptance as a plausible option. Some continue to perceive the regime as the primary factor in the emergence and growth of terrorism. The regime has also failed to cover up the presence of the FSA and democratic national opposition that continue to make real gains in rural Damascus, Qalamoun, Quneitra, Hauran, Hama, Aleppo, Idlib and other fronts.

CHAPTER IX

COMPARISON AND EVALUATION:

SIMILAR SEQUENCES OF PHASES, VARYING OUTCOMES

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has evaluated the developments in Egypt and Syria, two of the most significant actors in contemporary Arab politics, within the wider context of a continuing transformation in the Arab world. It has sought to explain why the conflicts, despite previously sharing similar processes and underlying causes, have resulted in two different scenarios. In both of these post-populist authoritarian countries during the 2000s, we can see similar developments that have formed the groundwork for the events subsequent to 2011. It is possible to identify a period in both countries that led to a serious breach in the social and political order. We have witnessed a state of disrepair, dissolution and dissatisfaction with state institutions and state-society relations, albeit to differing degrees, in both countries. Following the uprisings, we also witnessed a much more compact and quickly developing level of interaction (crisis and redressive action phases) in state-society relations. The scope and degree of these interactions have also been important in shaping the outcomes of the conflicts.

As I indicated at the very beginning of this study, in order to properly understand the policies sought by actors in the 'Arab Spring' and the strategic dynamics and rationales behind these policies, it is of utmost importance to first analyze how the nature of state-society and intra-institution/elite relations have evolved. The

theoretical and conceptual approaches that I have used from the very beginning, including social movement theories and Turner's 'social drama' approach, all provide us with this outlook.

This study has first worked to evaluate the historical and political trajectories of the two countries and has sought to measure the explanatory potential of this trajectory in accounting for the reasons and dynamics behind the two different outcomes. Secondly, it has analyzed the interactions between actors and the strategies they pursued after the initial uprisings in 2011. The comparison and evaluation of these two countries in this conclusion chapter will also be based on comparing these two particular periods: 1) the last decade prior to the uprisings 2) the interactions that occurred during the uprisings. In this sense, a comparison of the two narratives drawn will demonstrate the underlying factors that led to the two breaches, the different approaches implemented following the crisis, and will help us explain the differences in causal terms. We can discuss the two case studies as two separate social dramas that arose from similar reasons but ended very differently. Using Turner's conceptualization, whereas one side (Egypt) reached a certain level of reintegration or compromise, the other (Syria) experienced, a schism. In Turner's words, "schisms are unstable outcomes where all parties agree to live in a state of dissonance because the costs of compromise seem too high" (McFarland, 2004: 1292).

This study has carried out a detailed analysis of the process outlined above, including thorough testing of the framework utilized (see chapter II), which has been shaped according to the hypotheses. The study has also drawn from different theoretical approaches (see chapter II) and has operationalized this framework with the help of empirical data. This framework has been used to test my initial hypotheses. This section will summarize the results of the testing and the analyses of these results. This study aimed to test its hypotheses using the 'political opportunity structure' and the 'framing' approaches. Two separate independent variables have been utilized in seeking to answer the following questions: 1) how open or closed were these particular polities; 2) what are/were the activities of the countermovement agents (repression and counter-framing). Not by coincidence, the explanatory power of the second independent (activities of the counter-movement agents) variable is not

unrelated to the first one (degree of openness of the polity). At this point, one might object that a variable that is dependent upon another could by definition not be independent. However, this study insists on identifying the second variable as an independent variable for the following reason: As a whole, the first independent variable is appropriate for explaining the period between the 2000s and the moment when Mubarak left in 2011 as well as the developments in Syria up until now. While analyzing the two fundamentally different processes, it is clear that while the 'political opportunity structures' up until 2011 were relatively constant, the 'political opportunity structures' of the second period have been volatile. Accordingly, in order to conduct a healthy and succinct analysis, it was necessary to analyze the events up until the end of the first period as taken for granted for each case, and conduct a fresh inquiry into the second period. Stated differently, I have opened a 'subset' of second independent variable within the larger set of the first independent variable. Indeed, the transitions between the constant, structural and volatile aspects of political process approaches are complicated as indicated in chapter II. In order to compensate for the possible errors in my analysis due to this complication, this study analyzed the second process as if it was independent from the first. In both cases, while beginning the analysis of the second period, the level of openness demonstrated at the end of the first process is taken constant.

9. 2 Comparing the Codes of the Political and Social Situation Prior to the Uprisings (Breach)

As previously stated, the political and social contexts in Egypt and Syria during the pre-crisis process (particularly 2000-2011) must be taken into consideration in order to accurately understand the events during the crisis and the subsequent phases of redressive action (see chapter III). In the last 10 years, Egypt has experienced developments that laid the ground for the January 25, 2011 uprisings (see chapter IV). Egypt underwent a process in which dissatisfaction with President Mubarak increased, social discontent with the regime accumulated and political mobilization (and the potential for collective action) slowly but substantially developed during the third decade of Mubarak's rule. In this process the political scene has, both at the state and societal levels, born witness to arguments that have revolved around the question "What comes after Mubarak?" (Bradley, 2008: 201-230). Parallel to these polemics, as a result of the deteriorating social and economic conditions within a

dysfunctional state, interview data suggests that the political scene has entered a deadlock which helped to spark the uprisings. Therefore, in addition to the existing social and economic problems, the eventual dissolution of the Mubarak regime, the dysfunctional political system and the suspicions that the leadership would be handed down to Hosni Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak, are among the important factors that ought to be considered when trying to comprehend the pre-revolutionary Egyptian landscape.

In regards to Syria, it is worth noting that the contentious relations between the center and periphery have long affected Syrian politics and society. This tension has been conducive to conflict and is continually exacerbated by inherent conundrums with regard to the formation of a nation-state in a country that is home to different ethnic and sectarian groups. As was explained previously, one of the most significant aspects of the Syrian polity has been the repression of the forces of the periphery that was institutionalized, to a great extent, with the military coups and the related legal arrangements (see chapter V). It is commonly believed that in order to ensure the continuation of military control, the military elite did not hesitate, among other things, to create a culture of 'conflict' in the country by either portraying the opposition as radicals or supporting ethnic or sectarian cleavages. Specifically during the Hafez al-Assad period, which was led essentially by the military and security forces, different parts of society were co-opted by the Ba'ath party. Alongside this historical situation, Bashar al-Assad's accession to power during the 2000's has caused in some senses a change in the dynamics of state-society relations. The expression of continuous hope towards Bashar that he would implement some reforms, the discharge of old members of the regime, a change in the dynamics of distributing economic and political rent, as well as regional developments have been the main events/subjects that have marked Bashar's 10 year leadership prior to the uprisings. Of course there are many reasons why the Syrian regime is still standing and the conflict remains unresolved. These reasons can be roughly summarized under several headings, the first category being more related to the primary characteristics of the state.

This section of the chapter will work to explain in a comparative manner the causal mechanism between the independent and dependent variables identified in our

framework, (see chapter II) which have been substantially covered in chapters IV and V. In other words, I will analyze which of the cases under scrutiny presents a more open structure, through the help of 'political opportunity structures' and 'framing' approaches. The system's level of openness is of critical importance for the mobilization of the social movement. No matter how intensely the society expresses its feelings of hatred and dissatisfaction for the regime, as long as the system doesn't present the opportunity and the actors fail to recognize such structural opportunities, it is very difficult, if not impossible for the social movement to mobilize. As a brief reminder, the openness of a polity was tied to following functions (see chapter II): 1) the degree of concentration of state power; 2) the degree of the 'coherence' of public administration 3) degree of the state's territorial centralization; 4) direct institutionalized democratic procedures; 5) the relations of the system with the outside world.

In order to measure the effects of these five functions and clearly define and grade the effect of the independent variable (openness and closedness), three more separate defining functions were identified as necessary: 1) Foundation of the institutions and their characteristics; 2) Stability or instability of political alignments and divisions within the elite; 3) International alliances and constraints on state policy. After deconstructing these defining functions, the themes that should be dealt with when analyzing the cases are as listed below: a) co-optation strategies of the regimes, b) the structure of the coercive and judicial apparatuses c) the interactions between these apparatuses and other institutions, d) how the traditional foreign relations of the states have been arranged and e) the state-economy relationship (see chapter III). While analyzing each case, first part of this research has aimed to explain particularly the last 10 years with the help of these themes.

9.2.1. The degree of concentration of state power

It is proposed that "the greater the degree of separation of power between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary –that is the greater the degree of checks and balances-- the greater the degree of formal access [openness]" (Kriesi, 1995: 171). Despite the fact that the presidency's position is of vital importance in these two 'authoritarian' states, it is nevertheless possible to observe that there are some differences in regards to the relative degree of autonomy other institutions

(particularly the judiciary and military) enjoy in Egypt and Syria. The existence of institutions that maintain a certain level of autonomy from the state/regime can become a factor that prevents, or at least hinders, the implementation of certain policies. This would indicate that the polity has become relatively more open and increasing openness constitutes a 'political opportunity structure' for political mobilization. There is an inverse relationship between the level of openness and the area in which the head of state can maneuver. Further, there is a positive relationship between the level of openness and the area within which the social movement can maneuver as well as its effect on policy making. This is due to the fact that in an environment where checks and balances are relatively powerful, it is easier to expand the scope of rights in the manner social movements also desire.

As the research (reviewing the secondary literature) and formal/informal interviews I conducted during this study clearly demonstrate, in Egypt especially, the relative autonomy of the judiciary has created a 'political opportunity structure' in terms of political mobilization. Whereas Syria had a judiciary that was wholly under the control of the president, since the Nasser period the judiciary in Egypt has always contained a mainstream faction that supported the independence of the judiciary and was in constant struggle with the presidency. In fact as interview data suggests, the 2005 attitudes of the judges who were part of this faction have been important in increasing the motivation of opposition groups and demonstrating that the authority of the presidency can be challenged. That this attitude has secured an election period carried out under the supervision of the judiciary, was in and of itself an important victory; and also an indicator of at least a low level of institutional autonomy.

Another aspect that ought to be given attention within the context of this first function is the level of institutionalization and professionalization in state institutions. As Stacher (2007) has indicated in his detailed academic works, institutions with more professional and institutional characters are often more autonomous to the relatively politicized and unprofessional institutions. In this sense, the more professional and state-centered the institutions in a polity become, the more the alternative centers of power are multiplied and the authority of the presidency curtailed. For instance, in A. Shubaky's words, the Egyptian army acted as an institution [professional actor] not as a political actor before and during the crisis

(personal communication, December 25, 2012). In professionalized institutions, the continuity of the state institution triumphs over the prospects of the individual. The findings that have been drawn from the primary and secondary sources gathered within the context of this study show that while in Egypt there exists a higher level of reference (identification) to state and loyalty towards state institutions (or at least the existence of mutual interests) (A. E. H. Dessouki, personal communication, December 24, 2012), the loyalty and identification is aligned not with the institutions and state, but rather with the personality of the president or the regime in Syria. To T. al-Bishry (personal communication, January 2, 2013), an intellectual well acquainted with the state system promulgated by the Arab World, "Egypt has a relatively more institutionalized and professionalized state structure, despite its faults". One can note a relatively unsettled state structure in Syria when compared to Egypt. The unconsolidated nature of the state has meant that the institutions and elite have not prioritized the national interests of the state but rather their own interests as well as those of the president. It can be argued as well that the political and economic elite in Egypt have also tried to maximize their own interests. However, when compared to Syria the elites and institutions in Egypt present a clearer national consciousness. Specifically, the perception of the Egyptian army as a 'national institution' is wide spread. In N. Mustafa's words "there are very big differences between Assad and Mubarak; our [Egyptian] army is a national army while Assad`s is racists" (personal communication, December 19, 2012).

The military and the judiciary have always constituted a different center of power inside Egypt. This has enabled these institutions, although not always, to act in a relatively more flexible and autonomous manner when they felt a threat or challenge was directed at themselves or at the state. On the other hand, since they tied their prospects solely to the regime, not the state, the elites and institutions in Syria have been unsuccessful in becoming alternative centers of power, (even they desired this), and have had to rally behind the 'absolute' power of the president. It should be noted that the army, police and intelligence in Syria have been under the control of a small group of people since the 1970's. While it is possible to talk of power centers outside the presidency in Egypt, it is not possible to do so in Syria. Under normal circumstances, the institutions even in Egypt may seem to be obeying the president. However, especially in situations with a conflict of interest and in crisis situations,

the interests of the regime can easily be abandoned. For instance, the Egyptian "military was driven by its institutional interests to support the uprising" (Kandil, 2012a: 196). In this sense, Anderson (2011a: 26) clearly argues and confirms our findings that:

> In countries where affiliation to the state is widespread and clear cut, discarding the regime was relatively unthreatening; … very few Egyptians doubt their status as a citizen of Egypt, and this is independent of the kind of government they have. No Egyptian … worried that his passport would become worthless or that his right to live in his country would be challenged should the president resign and the constitution be rewritten.

With regards to the countries where the regime focuses on state building [like the Syrian case], she underlines that:

> … the identity of the regime is so closely tied to that of the state itself that efforts to dislodge the regime are interpreted as a challenge to the state. … They have built at least some of the elements of a modern state, a strong standing army, for example, and a public bureaucracy. But this relatively strong military and civilian administration is a reflection and extension of the regime and its ambitions. The state apparatus is a tool of the regime. These state-building regimes and their supporters have everything to lose should the regime fall and the state-building project be reversed… (2011a: 30-31).

9.2.2. The degree of 'coherence' in public administration

It was proposed at the very beginning that the greater the degree of coherence and internal coordination within the state, the more limited the formal access. Fragmentation and a lack of internal coordination multiply the points of access (Kriesi, 1995: 171) and this means more opportunities for mobilization. In other words, the lack of coordination within the state apparatus has meant the observation of new opportunities, given that the correct framing strategy is employed by the ones who seek more rights. It is relevant to ask how coherent the state itself is in these two countries.

It should be stressed that when things are going well politically, economically and socially one would expect a general level of coherent co-ordination between state

institutions, even in states with institutions enjoying a strong level of autonomy. The real lack of co-ordination and fragmentations may emerge when there is a conflict of interest or a political crisis. In this sense, the interactions between institutions and elites, how they view each other, and the degree of coherence (how they work together) between them is very important. With regards to this, it can be argued that there has been a relative lack of coherence between Egypt's institutions and elite, while those in Syria have continuously acted in total coordination. The Syrian regime consists of a union of many official and nonofficial structures, such as local governments, various ministries, the bureaucracy, army, intelligence agency, and economic elite. However, especially during Mubarak's later years in Egypt, one can observe the existence of *latent* tension between the army and police (the primary actor alongside Mubarak) and between the army and the economic elite. This function is indeed related to the first one, since the existence of autonomy may lead to an increase in fragmentation especially the disruption of cohesion in crisis situations over critical topics. This would mean that alternative voices are more easily heard inside the society, boosting the courage of opposition groups which then translates into an increase in the potential allies for the opposition. In short, it functions as a 'political opportunity structure' for mobilization.

In the last 10 years, both in Egypt and Syria, the circle of power has greatly narrowed and the numbers of those who hold power have decreased. In Egypt we saw a young class of newly emerging elite consisting of Gamal Mubarak and his confidants, primarily businessman Ahmed Ezz, have become more prominent in the ruling party, bureaucracy and the economy over time. This has increased both the resentment among traditional elites as well as the amount of conflicts of interest among institutions and led to the exclusion and alienation of larger groups. In other words, as A. Mousa (personal communication, January 2, 2013) argues, "when the president was strong and the power was in his hands as the sole power or dictator, all institutions worked in harmony, at least on the surface. Yet, with his weakening grip, the lack of harmony between the institutions became apparent". President Bashar al-Assad of Syria has similarly limited the circles who were influential in the leadership and who benefited from the administration, both in order to consolidate his own power and in order to discharge the older cadre.

In fact, in both countries the sons of leaders have sought to narrow the ruling strata and shrink the circles who have benefited from the regime. This has damaged traditional clientelist networks in both cases. Whereas Gamal has tightened the system in favor of his friends, Bashar has tightened it in favor of his own family and close friends. Whereas in Egypt this process was carried out by someone who was not yet president, in Syria it was carried out by a serving president who had already been tolerated by the people with the expectation that there would be a power struggle among the politicized institutions in case he was not been agreed on being president in 2000. This has inevitably forced the Egyptian elites who were unhappy with Gamal as a rising star to behave more flexibly. In other words, because the institutions in Egypt were more professional, the narrowing of ruling strata and the emergence of conflicts of interest has meant greater levels of dissatisfaction at the institutional level. In Syria, since state institutions have become synonymous with the privileged individuals, this narrowing down has resulted in dissatisfaction at the individual level for those excluded from the system which resulted in public discontent directed not at institutions but at individuals. In short, the dissatisfaction in Syria is based on individuals, so there has been no noticeable decrease in intra-institutional coherence. As the Syrian example demonstrates, the politicized and regime-loyal structure of the institutions can be sustained despite changes in the individuals themselves.

As with the Ba'ath Party in Syria, Egypt's NDP has also excluded some of his old sons. It is clear that the rural areas of the country had been continuously excluded and alienated. At that point of time, the main goal in both countries was to topple the older names in the parties. However, as a result of these, the events ended in a crude way, resulting in the exclusion of some within the NDP and Ba'ath, especially people living in the countryside. This has served to drive a wedge between different levels of society and the administrative elite. With the Ba'ath example, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the party was wholly pushed to the side. Intra-party disagreements have become more visible. The communication with the Sunni masses, particularly those living outside of Damascus, have come to the point of completely being cut off due to the abandonment of the Ba'ath party. The decline of the Ba'ath Party's traditional problem-solving role at the local level has made local administrations dysfunctional. Both regimes didn't realize that this very much

affected the power of the regime. They were so overconfident that they were unable to perceive the depth of the cracks in society.

One of the important differences between the two countries is that the Syrian leader was a relatively new president. Whereas public hopes with regards to Mubarak, who had come to power in the 1980's were quickly abandoned after the first 10 years of his rule, as a new leader Bashar still had promise. In other words, the Egyptian people had run out of patience with Mubarak, whereas Bashar was still viewed as a source of hope. Therefore, the disruption or decrease in coherence or the increase in fragmentation brought about a much larger level of social mobilization in Egypt. The Syrian people's expectations of their President assuaged the people's response and made it harder to abandon the intra-elite alliances. Moreover, the level of social dissatisfaction and cracking in Syria have remained limited due to the regional developments. In other words, the West's portrayal of Syria in this period has led to the Syrian regime's frequent usage of their "foreign enemies" argument and a greater emphasis on unity which has in turn prevented the people from perceiving emerging 'political opportunity structures'. Those who were aggrieved or discontent with the regime could not voice their opposition at the necessary level, especially with the lack of an elementary level of institutional support and where 'national' issues dominated the agenda. The further mobilization of the opposition was somehow prevented, which was already personal and fragmented.

Moreover the Syrian army's (security forces) loyalty to the regime passed every test and the partnership between the two remained unbroken in spite of the fact that Bashar disposed some certain figures. Groups who have continually demonstrated their loyalty to the regime hold important positions in the army. From another point of view, since the Egyptian army was more heavily involved with the economy as compared to the Syrian army, the rise of Gamal Mubarak and his team among the economic elite has caused much greater disturbances within the military than in Syria. When we consider that especially in recent periods both the economy and the security forces have already fallen under the control of the Assad and Makhluf families rather than a wider coalition, the domination of the economy by Assad's close circles has not caused as much of a disturbance in the security bureaucracy as an institution as it did in the Egyptian case. Rather, the fissures have been

interpersonal and created discontent only within the society. As intra-institutional coherence was preserved and therefore the capacity for repression remained the same, this equation has not evolved into political mobilization.

9.2.3 Degree of the state's territorial centralization

Kriesi (1995) points out that the greater the degree of decentralization (federalism/multiple points of access), the greater the degree of formal access. Neither Egypt nor Syria have a federal system, yet their degree of territorial centralization varies with regards to their demographic, geographic and ruling structures. For instance, belonging to a specific sect is a decisive precondition for recruitment in Syria, making it exceptionally difficult to become a member of the system if you do not belong to the correct sect. Therefore, it could be said that social heterogeneity also affects formal access. Syria is far more diverse and more spread out when compared to Egypt. Even though in terms of territory and population Egypt is bigger, Syria is more spread out not only geographically but also socially, ethnically and culturally. It has more religious sects, minorities, and parties. Egypt is a relatively more homogenous polity in the full sense of the word.

Although formal access in Egypt was also subject to restrictions, the diversity among members of the system is incomparable. We saw this in Egypt, with figures such as Tariq al-Bishry able to enter the Council of State and people of different *ideologies* to important positions within state institutions. However in Syria, people of different identities have the ability to rise to important positions subject to the degree of their loyalty to the regime. Family members especially of Assad and Mahkluf families have taken on important positions within the administration over the last 10 years.

Stated differently, during the years of the pervasive and overwhelming control by the Ba'ath regime, there were relatively multiple points of access to the national, regional and local levels in Syria, even by other sects such as the Sunnis. Ba'ath offices used to be effective centers for the recruitment of a select group of people from a diverse society. In Egypt's more centralized system, there were not enough access points on the local level, whereas the access points in the center (Cairo) were quite diverse and the autonomies of the institutions were relatively higher. In other words, the main and perhaps only center of the political system in Egypt was Cairo,

where the access points were varied. Damascus, however, was not the only political and economic center in Syria. Localization was much more powerful in Syria when compared to Egypt as there were different power centers, like Aleppo and due to the importance of the Ba'ath party and its cadres in the rural areas. Here, the critical point lies in the policies of Bashar al-Assad which began to change this structure in favor of Damascus during his reign over the last ten years. This is clear when compared to the fact that the ruling party in Egypt has never been as strong as the Ba'ath party in Syria in that particular manner. The Ba'ath Party's rural institutions were especially powerful and could help co-opt local elements through these structures. However, this situation in Syria has deteriorated over the last 10 years and the relative level of formal access that previously existed has also disappeared.

In this sense, it is clear that there has been a serious decrease in the access of local elements to positions of power in Syria. While certain elements of exclusion exist in Egypt too, in Syria it is obvious that the wholesale abandonment of the Ba'ath party as the main vehicle of recruitment has created more and more exclusion. This has led to an even greater tightening of the relatively low level of openness in the polity. Opposition groups have not been presented with useful opportunities inside the system. The Ba'ath party, an important institution in Syria, was pushed out of the system leading to great disturbances in terms of the local elements' ability to access economic and political rents.

On top of all this, if we consider that Syria is ruled by a minority regime and has strategically placed Alawites in positions of power, we can talk of a more intensive tightening of ruling strata. Reaching the center has become more difficult in the Syrian case. The alternative potential power holders have had a higher impact on policy making in Egypt. The social dissatisfaction with social exclusion was higher in Syria, yet the violence that the Syrian regime used against the opposition prevented social dissatisfaction from transforming into mobilization. The aforementioned coherence between security forces and the regime has also prevented this. However, the greater amount of formal access in Egypt provided social movements space for maneuvering (political opportunity structure) and therefore even lower levels of dissatisfaction had the potential to be expressed as action. In

other words, they were not face to face with a coherent state that could penalize them (greater amount of dysfunctionality in Egypt).

9.2.4 Direct institutionalized democratic procedures

Although none of the countries being compared are democratic, we can argue that Egypt has had a relatively more democratic experience than Syria. This situation somehow engenders 'relatively better functioning' procedures or implications of 'democracy'. In this sense, it is necessary to emphasize that civil society, as an essential element of democracy, has a broader space for action in Egypt (Ibrahim 2006). It is possible to illustrate this through a number of examples. For instance, though forbidden from politics, the Muslim Brotherhood could participate in elections with independent candidates, was included in decision-making by the government, entered into negotiations from time to time (such as the 2005 elections) and it has survived effectively in various unions and syndicates. This suggests the existence of a relatively broader political space and is proof of a greater political access in Egypt. In regard to the prospects for democratic change, out of all Arab countries, it can be said that Egypt has the most developed institutional infrastructure (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013; Dessouki, 2008: 81-135). In this regard Arafat (2009: 153) argues that:

> A democratic transition in Egypt could prove less complex than in other Middle Eastern states. Egypt is not going through a nation building process; it is the oldest nation-state in the region; and it has clear boundaries and a strong national identity. Egypt also has well established government institutions.

Moreover, Egyptians are not unfamiliar with democratic practices, for they prevailed during the first half of the 20th century. Indeed, the entire political discourse of the 2000's was flooded with calls for reform, and though little reform seemed to take place, there were critical steps taken by the regime such as constitutional amendments and the monitoring of the elections by judges in 2005. We can observe that over time, these constraints turned into opportunities for the opposition groups in Egypt. The single most powerful element pushing the regime to democratize were

opposition groups, human right organizations[385], non-governmental organizations (unions, foundations, etc.) and persistent pressure coming from the West, particularly the U.S (Rubin, 2006). For example, judges were allowed to monitor elections, which is directly related to the implementation of democratic procedures, as a result of international pressure.

In Syria however, despite discussion of reforms from 2000-2002, Syrian civil society has failed to develop considerably and no reforms have been implemented. In this sense, the literature also classifies Egypt as a semi-authoritarian regime whereas Syria is characterized as a country where authoritarianism is strictly implemented. After the early 1980's the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was almost completely ostracized from the system, its members declared terrorists, is a clear indicator of being a relatively closed polity. Therefore, civil society is almost non-existent in Syria where intelligence and security forces have penetrated Syrian society, and the country's relations with the modern Western world are very limited. Yet, at this point Pinto argues that in spite of the fact that the reforms during the 'Damascus spring' were "fast and ephemeral", in any case they allowed "the emergence of a public debate on democracy and political freedom that had some impact on the political idiom of the current process" (UMP, 2013).

At this point, my findings tell me that the Hama massacre in Syria (1982) was an important setback not only for the democratization process but also for political mobilization in many ways. Firstly, it crushed a movement that was pushing for change in the political system. Secondly, it provided a memory of the consequences of acting against the regime. Therefore, such a massacre not only eliminated an organized opposition movement but also prevented the formation of organized movements and civil society in the future. Thirdly, it taught the regime that it had to increase its oppressive tendencies particularly via the secret services (*muhabarat)* and military.

[385] Apart from Muslim Brotherhood affiliated organizations, there have been some other influential secular and liberal pro-democracy human rights organizations like *Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies* led by S. E. Ibrahim.

Throughout this study, the effects of such violence on civilians have been clear, with their long lasting effects discouraging the formation of visible opposition groups. Although dissident individuals have always existed in Syrian society and have protested against the regime in their own ways, they have found it difficult to broaden their social bases. The ordinary Syrian citizen was very aware of the ramifications for himself and his family if s/he were to join such an opposition group prior to the uprisings unfolded in 2011. Landis correctly recognizes the effects of such an excessive use of violence on the psychology of the Syrian society. This point is perhaps of utmost importance for Syria in terms of the lack of collective action. The Syrian interviewees living in refugee camps who were questioned for this research were often apathetic and depoliticized during their long interviews. It was very difficult to find Syrians who were willing to talk in detail about what had happened to them and who were able to express themselves freely without threat of punishment. This research also encountered a complete lack of institutions able to provide statements or explanations alternative to the regime in the Syrian case. This methodological difficulty in the context of this study in and of itself demonstrates a clear difference between Egypt and Syria in terms of openness. Consequently, the experience of democracy in Syria is less mature than Egypt. This created an important 'political opportunity structure' for the success of social movements in the Egyptian case.

Despite the existence of serious limitations, many different groups have persisted in Egyptian civil society, the Muslim Brotherhood being the most prominent. These groups have played an active role in increasing social awareness and have improved people's ability to act in unison when necessary. In spite of the fact that "the Mubarak years witnessed a general impoverishment of political expression and an alarming rise in violations of human rights", the wrongdoings of the state did not go unchallenged (el-Ghobashy, 2012b: 122). "Egypt had experienced the longest and strongest wave of worker protest since the end of WWII" between 2006 and 2011 (Bishara, 2012: 85). In other words, opposite of Syria, they have provided an area of flexibility and greater movement. This larger space within which they could move inevitably led people to become more dynamic and politically aware. One way or another, the existence of civil society organizations and opposition forces in Egyptian society has served as a factor that kept society active and alive. Especially

during the post 2005 process, we have seen the growth of greater social and political activity outside of the traditional opposition. Despite the pressure that arose from the policies adopted by the state, the Egyptian people have, in one way or another, been able to organize through different platforms. Their ability to organize is also closely related to the openness of the Egyptian polity. On this particular subject, Korany and al-Mahdi (2012: 9) say:

> In Egypt, various forms of mobilization over the past decade have cumulatively paved the way for the uprising; the protest movements against the wars on Iraq in 2003 and Gaza in 2008; the rise of the pro-democracy movement, with Kefayah and in support of judiciary independence in 2004-2005; the labor protests that began in Mahalla in 2006 and spread throughout Egypt, eventually counting more than 1.7 million demonstrators; and finally, the anti-sectarian protests that peaked after the church bombing in Alexandria in early 2011.

As an outcome of the governance systems of both countries, the people's desire to protest was for decades focused on foreign policy issues, first and foremost the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Egypt, save the bread protests, the protest culture has primarily been based on anti-Western/Israeli sentiments. However, especially in Egypt, with the process of political mobilization beginning in the 2000s, the increasing social awareness and courage as well as the aftermath of the 2005 elections resulted in domestic political issues being taken up by protestors. The political mobilization and elections in 2005 brought with them a process where domestic politics and the constitution were open to debate. In short, after 2005 Egypt began to focus more on domestic political issues. The opposition's discourse towards foreign issues also began to gain ground in domestic politics. In Syria on the other hand, although there was a short period where domestic issues were on the agenda, especially following the 'Damascus Spring', each time regional and foreign developments prevented domestic political debates from getting the attention they deserved. In other words, Syrian society failed to develop a critical attitude towards domestic. Domestic issues that briefly took the foreground in 2005 were once again overshadowed, for instance, this time with the Hariri assassination and the world's attention directed at Syria.

9.2.5 Relations of the polity with the outside world

The strength of the ties that bind the actors inside the polity is closely related to the mobilization of social movements. Meyer (2013: 17) argues that assessing opportunity by only looking at national political structures "neglects" the significant role that the international dimensions of the issue such as alliances and transnational movements play in "constraining" both the state and their challengers. At this point he points out that "political institutions are nested within a larger international context and that the tightness or looseness of that nesting affects the range of possible alliances and policy options available within the state" (Meyer, 2003: 17).[386]

Egypt's relations with the West and especially the U.S. and its sensitivity toward international developments are higher due to the fact that its economic structure unavoidably creates an indirect—if not direct—pressure on the Egyptian elite (Richter, 2007; Richter & Steiner, 2008; Pawelka, 1995). Egypt can be defined as a semi-rentier state,[387] "which depends both on the productivity of its economy and on different kinds of rents (oil rent, rent for the use of Suez Canal, transfer rents from the Gulf States and financial aid from the West, i.e. political rents)" (Pawelka et al, 1997: 45). Western powers have established themselves more in Egypt through the US's long standing relationships with the Egyptian military and Egyptian businesses, more than we can find anywhere in Syria. In the Syrian example, we see a historical tradition of guarding itself from the West and a violence-promoting alliance with Iran and Russia. As a result, Syria does not feel international pressure as Egypt does. On the contrary, Syria was threatened by the West as an enemy and this meant that certain opposition groups had to willingly or reluctantly abandon their dissidence for the sake of national unity, thus increasing intra-institutional coherence. Consequently the Syrian regime, which has a relatively closed society, does not hesitate to use violence against its people as it does not have developed relations with the West. Moreover, Syria has more neighbors than Egypt and the neighbors of Syria at least have similarly diverse populations and more influence on certain constituencies within Syria. In S. E. Ibrahim's words:

[386] For a detailed discussion on the foreign policies of Arab States see the seminal work by Korany & Dessouki (1991).
[387] From a different point of view Ottoway (2003: 31-50) also defines Egypt as institutionalized semi-authoritarian state.

> For example, you have Kurds who have an extension from Syria to Turkey to Iraq. You have Alawites who also have an extension between Syria, Turkey and Lebanon. You have nationalists spreading to Iraq. You have Baathists in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. So you have a more diverse scene in Syria with so many agendas. You have four or five major sects of demographic socio-economic formations in Syria. This means you have at least 5-6 political agendas and priorities. This is not the case in Egypt (personal communication, December 12, 2012).

This has rendered Syria more vulnerable to developments in the region. In such a troubled region, the Syrian regime can easily use the "foreign enemies" argument and foreign policy developments, such as its continuing rhetorical skirmish with Israel, to illegitimate the opposition. It is worth noting that elites in Syria are biased towards the core and the regional context of Syria. Syria was taken as corner opposition for Israel and Egypt was not. In the international context, Syria has become the playground for a new Cold War between the USA and Russia (N. Mustafa, personal communication, December 19, 2012).

While what has happened in Egypt in the last decade has become as a whole a 'political opportunity structure' for Egyptians, it is difficult to foresee anything similar for Syria. Although the regime has weakened in Syria as well, it has not witnessed intense public mobilization. Although a level of mobilization existed at certain points, this activity was quelled as a result of both internal and external reasons. Let us review the three functions indicated at the outset: 1) there are important differences in the two countries regarding the foundation of institutions and their characteristics. This has been demonstrated especially with regards to autonomy. 2) Stability or instability of political alignments and divisions within the elite. This function is unstable in Egypt and alignments are flexible. We have sought to argue this from the very beginning. 3) The two countries are also diametrically opposed with regards to international alliances and constraints on state policy.

Every function that gives us insight into the level of openness of the polity is inevitably related to another. The fact that the judiciary in Egypt has reached a level of autonomy on the one hand means that people from different aspects of society can

also reach the center, though in a limited fashion. We also see democratic procedures being implemented at some level which, disrupts intra-institutional coherence and constrains the policies of other institutions, for example the presidency (Rutherford, 2008: 2). This in turn increases the motivation of opposition elements and gives them the ability to act more freely.

The process of reform in Egypt that began in 2004-2005 and the flexibility of the political mobilization that resulted has in one way or another continued onto later years. In Aly's words "political movements, civil society organizations, an enhanced media presence, and an increasingly assertive judiciary made the political process in Egypt much more complex than traditional authoritarian model" (2012: 28). However, the gestures of reform that followed what we know as the 'Damascus Spring' in Syria have not been sustainable. It is clear that this was more the result of foreign actors threatening and pressuring Syria. In other words, this period witnessed the alienation and tightening of the ranks in Syria, not as a result of domestic issues, but rather due to the influence of external developments. This process has also made it harder for members of the ruling elite to express opposing opinions. For that reason, grievances that arose as the result of Assad's pro-reform attitude were viewed as minor issues. This has resulted in the inadvertent tightening of the bonds among the ruling elite. In Hinnebusch's words "by the end of 2010 the outcome of Bashar al-Assad's authoritarian upgrading had become apparent. He had used the external threat to generate nationalist legitimacy, enabling him to marginalize the old guard and ward off pressures from democracy activists" (2012: 106).

As a result of this and as the literature also predicts, the conclusion we can draw from the evaluation of these two countries is the reality that Egypt is a relatively more open polity when compared to Syria. In this sense, with regards to the first dimension of the issue the social movement that arose in Egypt was more successful. The 'political opportunity structures' for the social movements always existed and the structure of the state, the mistakes committed, and the experience of the society has facilitated the identification of these existing 'political opportunity structures'. In Syria, however, the formation of 'political opportunity structures' was either completely revoked through the actions of the state or else was difficult to perceive for those inexperienced with protest due to the regional developments.

9.3 Intense Interaction between Two Actors: Protesters vs. the State (The Crisis and Redressive Action Phases)

In the previous section, I made comparisons based on the first independent variable. Based on our findings, it can comfortably be claimed that Egypt is a more open polity relative to Syria. It would be unreasonable to claim that the positions, reflexes and attitudes taken by state institutions and opposition groups during the uprisings were independent of this degree of openness. Yet, I argue when you compare the interactions that took place between the actors to the degree of openness, the more open the polity the more rapid events develop in times of crisis. In such instances one can observe more sudden shifts in 'political opportunity structures'. Fundamentally these uprisings were a period in which the inclination to deploy violence in relation to the type of support from foreign actors and the coherence level of state institutions have changed rapidly. Therefore, in order to measure these sudden shifts and analyze this volatile process, I have found it more appropriate to operationalize my second independent variable which helps us comprehend more clearly the interactions and consequences of this process. To state my variable explicitly: The variable is the activities of countermovement agents and its defining functions are as follows: 1) Activists' perceptions of political opportunity; 2) The availability of elite alliances. We can think of the second variable as an independent and separate set inside the first independent variable. It is important to reiterate that the first independent variable still operates in this process of crisis and redressive action.

9.3.1 Decisive Public vs. Confused Regime in Egypt and Confused Public vs. Decisive Regime in Syria

In the year 2011 when protests and sit-ins began in Tahrir Square on January 25^{th,} these acts appealed to many young people and, generating large popular support, turned into a widespread popular movement (Aly, 2012: 21). The atmosphere of the protests brought together different segments of Egyptian society in the name of a greater cause, something that could not have been foreseen by even the most optimistic Egyptians. What we observed in Egypt then was that protesters were leaving their sub-identities behind and were rallying behind their common Egyptian identity. It is widely acknowledged by my interviewers that nobody participated in the uprisings with the goal of promoting strict and fanatic sub-relations that would

have acted as a divisive factor between the protesters. As a result of the cooperation that took place in the name of exposing and condemning the Egyptian political reality, Mubarak was forced to resign. This success proves that Egyptians had the ability to create a mutual understanding and a harmony despite the repression they were under. This is an indicator that people who could not find a middle ground before got aware of the dysfunctionality of the state and they subsequently used that weakness as an opportunity. Thus, it demonstrates there was a certain level of cooperation and understanding between different segments of the society and international actors.

From my findings, it is clear that the standing of Gamal Mubarak was an important factor in the last 10 years. Many people expressed their belief that the people's discontent with him was a factor that hastened the toppling of the regime and the fracturing of the already 'deteriorating alliance among the elite'. In parallel, the aforementioned problems precipitated the 'large coalition of opposition' (Aly, 2012: 34). Islamist, secular, and liberal opposition groups, movements, and organizations, along with part of the bureaucracy, united against the Mubarak regime (Cook, 2012: 279). The literature on the uprisings also indicates that the political context within which these events occurred was of great importance to their success/mobilization (Kriesi, 1995: 167). According to Anderson (2011a: 32), "populations with robust identities as citizens and increasingly experienced and agile political actors" have the ability to successfully resolve conflict by way of negotiations and concessions "if contentious transitions and the building of sustainable institutions of more open, transparent, and accountable government".

It is clear that the Mubarak administration was completely incapable and apathetic in its last years, with little ability to resist or counter such a resistance movement. For the last decade, Mubarak's policies had become the reason behind the state's instability. As A. Shobaky (personal communication, December 25, 2012) stated:

> Mubarak stepped down quickly because first of all he had been in power for 30 years. His style of managing power was to eliminate the power inside the regime … If this revolution had happened under the Nasser or Sadat regimes, Nasser or Sadat would have been able resign with several eligible candidates

available to replace them. The problem here was the weakness of the Mubarak regime: either you choose Mubarak or you choose an even weaker candidate.

For this reason, he was not able to quell the protests in the same way that he had before. On the other hand, according to T. al-Bishry (personal communication, January 3, 2013), this resistance movement did not have a particular leadership, leaving security forces with no specific target to attack. If these movements had been constructed on one of any of the existing political parties which had renowned leaders, the regime would have had the opportunity to counter the movement in an easier way by either inciting riots among them or arresting the symbol figures of the movements. In short, due to the liminal position of the regime and the collective action of society, the crisis and redressive action phases in Egypt were relatively short.

The crisis phase in Egypt was extensive, intense and compact. Yet, according to Turner, "more extensive dramatic crisis arises from repeated cycles of crisis" in which the "legitimacy of the administrative role frame is undermined, and its repair requires some form of structural change so that the solidarity can be reintegrated" (cited in McFarland, 2004: 1276).

Figure 2. Phases of the Egyptian Social Drama

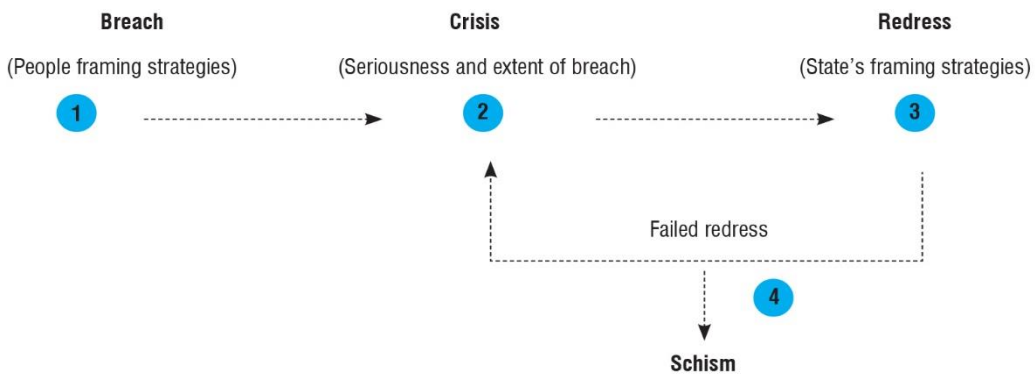

Figure 3. Phases of the Syrian Social Drama

The Syrian people, in that sense, experienced the despotic face of the regime when a group of students wrote freedom slogans on the walls in Dara'a (March 2011) and were arrested. Syrian people showed they would no longer remain indifferent to regional changes. In fact, similar problems existed in both countries, but in Egypt the relatively open polity helped the opposition obtain a more substantial and solid mobilization, while on the other hand in Syria the opposition experienced a more spontaneous uprising. In Pearlman's words "acting on the heuristics availability and representativeness, citizens in other Arab countries [except Egypt] overestimated their countries' prospects for replicating Tunisia's success. They thus rushed to emulate revolution without seriously evaluating opportunities and risks" (2013: 389).

Even though Syrians have not experienced an active protest cycle in the last decades, they were able to break through the barrier of fear that had been created by the Assad regime, largely a result of the Hama massacre. They were able to do so however, not with the same motives as the Egyptians. While the Egyptian uprising was the result of a cumulative experience, Syrians were motivated mainly by the wave of protests initiated by Tunisians and empowered by the Egyptians. In other words, Syrians embarked upon their struggle without a structured and matured material base. This is the most significant difference between the two uprisings. On the one hand, Egyptians exploited the state's weaknesses and were both able to identify and capitalize on the opportunities they were presented and those they created. Conversely, the Syrians perceived certain opportunities from the very beginning, but were late in recognizing them.

In fact, the entire Syrian public expected the president to fulfil his promise of legal reform, a pledge that dated back to two months before the events. The common opinion was that the Assad/Ba'ath regime would act more moderately in the face of what befell Gaddafi. Nonetheless, just as no Arab state intended to give an affirmative response to the reform demands that followed the Tunisian uprising, the same occurred in Syria. It was rumored that since his accession to power in 2000, Assad has delayed all promises of reform as a result of strict opposition from the oligarchy surrounding him. However, recent events revealed that it was a much more complicated situation. The first parliament speech made by Assad during the crisis was no different from the last speeches made by Hosni Mubarak. Assad self-

assuredly accused foreign powers of being behind the uprising and labelled the demonstrators as provocateurs. While he was expected to give good news of legal and political reforms, Assad left the platform leaving the Syrian people with unanswered demands. This speech generated negative sentiments towards the government, giving many feeling that Syria had been a prosperous and free country until a group of traitors took it away.

Assad's main purpose was to gain time in Syria. In contrast, everything occurred so quickly in Egypt that there was no opportunity to even think about gaining time. What is more, the regime that was so confident in its abilities that it could not comprehend what was happening at the time. Likewise, while the issue was not taken into serious consideration in Egypt, due to arrogance of power, Syria was determined to prevent the uprising from the very beginning. Thus, while there was a strategy for such events in Syria, Egypt faltered. In sum, while there was a *decisive and united public* in Egypt against a *confused regime*, there was a *confused and atomized public* against a *decisive and united regime* in Syria. There was a 'liminality' that occurred with the Egyptian regime and in the Syrian case the 'liminality' occurred with the public and international actors. In Syria, the time advantage gave Assad the opportunity to develop and implement new strategies. It seems that Assad followed a very strategic path and implemented his moves with self-confidence. Furthermore, the Syrian regime was experienced with using violence against its public did not have to think so much about what action it would take.

It can be argued that Mubarak attempted to pursue an old-fashioned strategy against the opposition with a mix of reconciliation and repression. At the end of the day, however, he was unable to mobilize the repressive elements of the state to split the opposition coalition. While potential allies of the opposition noticed the increased promise of political change, Mubarak's traditional allies had enough reason to reconsider their coalition with Mubarak. Hence, Mubarak's initial concessions and attempts to reconfigure the government were too little and too late. When Mubarak realized that he could not lean on the military to support him against the opposition, he and his entourage sought an exit option for him. In contrast, Assad, who saw no safe "personal exit", could depend upon the loyalty of those close to him and the

coalition created in common interest with "substantial armed forces was determined to mobilize in an effort to crush the opposition" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 478).

The opposition's claims in Syria began with innocent protests and there was an effort to criminalize them by establishing alleged connections with al-Qaeda. The second stage of Assad's strategy was to make assertions about the "traitors in collaboration with foreigners" who "plot mischief" in the country. The frequent talk of the presence of al-Qaeda militants served to legitimize any intervention by regime against the people. This thesis reveals that the basic strategies implemented by the Assad and Ba'ath regime proceed simultaneously under certain titles. The regime used violence as a conscious and well-planned tool of suppression from the very beginning of the protests. The violence had two targets, which were both reached. In the beginning, the violence served to suppress the people and destroy the opposition. It was then utilized in order to justify regime's actions and turn the fabricated situation into reality. By turning the alleged situation into reality, the opposition lost its persuasiveness and legitimacy in the eyes of the public and international actors. Initially, the projected reality was enough to create confusion, with international actors hesitant to act and free riders unable to provide support, meaning extra time for the regime to plan its next moves.

Secondly, all instances of false propaganda occurred with the help of Iran. In addition to this, Assad tried to buy time with reform promises and dialogue with national and international actors. In the end, promises of reform and attempts at dialogue provided the regime with some time, as well as with a basis for the realization of their projected reality on the ground by means of violence. As a result, the opposition lost its credibility, while Assad once again became the one to be addressed by international actors in the course of time.

9.3.2 Decisive Role of the Armies

What is discussed in Chapter VII and VIII demonstrates that the involvement of the army and security forces in the uprisings played a determining role in both countries. This is not the first time that something of the sort has occurred in Egyptian history, as Egypt has experienced five revolutions during its modern history (Leyla, 2012: 27). When the previous revolutions in Egypt are examined, it is clear that

cooperation between the army and society is not unique to the 2011 revolution (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013: Leyla, 2012: 28). The Egyptian army participated in the January 25th revolution, rushing into the streets and squares upon Mubarak's orders, yet refused to open fire against its own people. The armed forces instead began to arrange intense unilateral meetings calling for the dismissal of Mubarak, and in the end the Egyptian 'revolution' became a success. In Egypt, the display of unity from the people forced the army to take a certain stance. Hence, the revolution took on a populist character, gaining the public's full support and the support of traditional state institutions. The last example of these repeating situations was the army acting in line with the public's demands and forcing the Mubarak regime from power.

Conversely, the Syrian public's perception of revolution and military interventions and their understanding of revolution and history of revolution was opposite of the Egyptian understanding. While the Egyptian army supported the public during all revolutions, the Syrian army, which is less national, has always worked against the public during all previous uprisings. As noted by Ali al-Bash (personal communication, February 21, 2013) "the Egyptian army is home to every section of society and therefore has not been a puppet of the regime, however the army in Syria is one". Pierret underlines that the kin-based structure of an army is a very influential tool "to make sure that you can use the army's full military might against the population" (Abu-Khalil, 2013). Put differently, a military that is representative of its society could not do what the Syrian army has been doing for years. As discussed in the previous section, the fundamental dynamics of the modern Syrian state were founded on such a calculation. Especially under Hafez al-Assad the relatively national and secular structure of the army was further eroded. Massacres like Hama which were carried out by the army and security forces caused great traumas to the people, especially to the Sunni majority.[388] As a result of such events, neither the army nor security forces ever became national institutions in Syria, unlike the Egyptian army. "Kinship has been key to securing the loyalty of the upper echelons of the military" in Syria, along with the sectarian affiliations (Abu-Khalil, 2013). Mubarak was not in a position to have such "a large number of relatives among the

[388] Almost every interviewee talks about this massacre.

top military and security hierarchy, contrary to Bashar al-Assad" (Abu-Khalil, 2013).[389] In Pierret's words:

> In such a situation generals cannot seriously think about sacrificing the president in order to save the system: contrary to their Egyptian … counterparts, they are not in a position to claim that they are in fact good guys who have nothing to do with the awful incumbent dictator. They stay with Assad or they fall with him (Abu-Khalil, 2013).

With the police left out of the equation during the January 25th protests, Mubarak had to rely on the military for support, making them primary actors in the uprisings (B. Korany, personal communication, December 12, 2012). The irony was that it was Mubarak's policies that had weakened the army's position in favor of the police forces prior to the uprisings. However, the military refused to use violence to suppress the civilians. The regime quickly lost its motivation and its main security apparatus, the police. Mubarak failed to find an armed force to compensate for the police, thus finding himself in a difficult position from an early point in the uprisings. On the other hand, one cannot claim that the Syrian army has remained coherent in the full sense of the word both internally and in its relations with the regime for such a long period of time. Although kinship and sectarianism had been an important unifying force, the length of the conflict has caused defections from the army and a drop in morale. However, these have occurred at a more limited and personal level when compared to Egypt. Moreover, although cracks appeared in Syria's own armed forces, each time the regime was successful in finding fresh forces to compensate for the numbers lost to defection. Iran and Hezbollah have made significant contributions that have been critical in replenishing the army's numbers. The effect of foreign actors on the conflict is clear in this regard.

In addition, the role of mass media was crucial to the outcomes of these conflicts. When demonstrators "chanted 'the whole world is watching' it means they believe they matter" (Gamson & Meyer, 1996: 285). In Egypt, the media coverage of the events received both increased the motivation of the opposition and weakened the

[389] Please note that Bashar al-Assad's own brother Maher has been the head of the military (other relatives in top military/security positions include Hafez Nakhluf, Dhu al-Himma Shalish, Atef Najib and Asaf Shawkat, among many others).

regime's ability to use violence against the people. However, the failure of the media to portray the events in Syria in a transparent manner to the international community meant that the Syrian regime worried less about the consequences of using violence against the people. Similarly, whereas the protests in Egypt intensified in certain city centers (Cairo, Alexandria) the protests in Syria were not centralized, happening largely outside of the central cities (Aleppo, Damascus). This has both decreased the political cost of repression and made it harder for protestors to coordinate their efforts. Though it was not expected even by the leaders of the movements themselves, Egyptians ultimately succeeded into forcing Mubarak to step down. While it was clearly not a full-fledged revolution, it was the beginning of an irreversible transformation process which began with the fall of President Mubarak. In a country of 88 million people, almost 25 percent of the citizens participated in the uprisings which took place in every single Egyptian province (A. Derdari, personal communication, April 26, 2013). The lack of media coverage and the lack of international pressure against the use of violence by the regime made it easier for the Syrian regime to suppress the opposition. Especially in Egypt, the close relationship between the US and the army meant that the military was more cautious so as to protect its own interests, resulting in low levels of violence. Therefore, this paper takes the position that this foreign pressure is among the factors prevented the security institutions from using violence during the uprisings, and the institutions which allied with the West facilitated the leadership change.

9.3.3 Role of International Actors

It has been five years since the beginning of the uprising in Syria, and the ever present violence gradually intensifies, with thousands killed or disappeared during the process. Not a day goes by without news of mass murder. International actors have yet to make a coordinated effort to resolve the conflict. The uncertainty of what the result would be procured a wider space within which the Syrian regime could maneuver. In other words, it encouraged Assad to implement even stricter policies. Accordingly, most of the Syrians who participated in my interviews considered the position of international actors as the greatest factor preventing the resolution of the conflict.

In parallel, Syrians did not believe that the regime would fall, especially when they considered the stance taken by international actors. The aforementioned efforts by international actors for negotiation with Assad just made things more difficult for the opposition. For example, the Syrian middle class, who do not support Assad but do not foresee him falling from power, have maintained their support for Assad, at least outwardly. This support has affected the motivation of opposition, constricted the space for civil struggle, pushed people to arm themselves and prevented the emergence of a united domestic will for change. Thus, no cohesive opposition was able to organize. Since the beginning, the possibility that a large section of society could take the side of the opposition in the case the international actors completely abandoned the regime was completely ignored. The reluctant attitude of international actors successfully deterred any actors who may have been willing to rebel.

The greater level of regional openness in Syria when compared to Egypt also meant that in a moment of crisis a greater number of actors were able to intervene in the Syrian affairs. For example, while one can talk of the US's dominating influence in Egypt, in Syria, Iran, Russia, the US as well as the Gulf countries and Turkey have intervened in one way or another. This has made things more difficult for the opposition and has confused potential allies both internally and internationally.

Another reason that international actors were unable to successfully oppose the Syrian regime was because of the merger of the regime and the state. This is one of the reasons that it has been so difficult for bordering countries or allies of Syria to figure out how to influence the Syrian regime. In Anderson's words "there is a real policy challenge in trying to think about how to support the Syrian opposition in a way that would not have the outcome of destroying not only the regime, but the state apparatus that it has been constructing" (2011a: 31). As for the regimes that Anderson (2011a: 33-34) describes as "state building regimes" and which have experienced violence in the last two to three decades, she says "the international actors would be confronted with the challenge of taking seriously its commitment to "Responsibility to Protect" populations at risk from their own governments".

9.3.4 Being Blind to the Opportunities Available: Effective Counter-framing Strategies

The structure of the Syrian state and its alliance with notable actors such as Russia, China and Iran, and the lack of any significant pressure by the West on the regime has helped to postponement of fall of Assad. Additionally, the violence from Ba'ath elements and propaganda distribution to damage the motivation of the opposition and confuse international actors helped Assad to remain in power. These tactics demonstrate the success of the Ba'ath regime when it comes to manipulation and propaganda. An intense race continues between the parties on the ground. It is not a merely physical battle, but a political clash of propagandas, with the contribution of the media.

In Egypt, the regime could not even find an opportunity for counter-framing. Even more, the arrogance of those in power prevented such thinking, since they were stuck in a state of *liminality* following the initial uprisings. The protesters were able to pass significant thresholds while the regime was still formulating their response.

In the beginning of the Syrian conflict, protesters perceived a situation that did not exist in reality. However, once the uprisings began, if actors both inside and outside the country had worked to form new opportunities, these opportunities could have been realized. Even if not realized, at least these illusory opportunities could have been used to damage inter-elite alliances and bolster the motivation of the people. In fact, the Syrian people thought there to be an opportunity, and therefore didn't succumb to the violent repressive tactics of the regime. By the end of the first week of clashes, the regime had killed many protestors. Seeing the determinacy, will and efforts of the protestors, the Syrian regime and Iran understood that although no opportunities existed at that time, the persistence of this kind of motivation carried the possibility of creating new opportunities. Therefore they immediately began counter-framing and propaganda campaigns. One would be dreaming to argue that 'if there wasn't the potential for new opportunities being created, the regime wouldn't resort to such black propaganda and violence'.

The real issue in this situation concerned the success of the propaganda campaign carried out by the Syrian regime and Iran. Syrians on the ground knew very well

what was going on. However, the lack of support or pressure from outside, and the fact that the gravity of the situation was ignored meant the intra-elite alliance could persist. The real target of the propaganda was, therefore, foreign actors. In this sense, successfully silencing Assad and Iran would be a major opportunity for the Syrian opposition.

During the interviews conducted for this study, it was clear that Egyptians obviously could imagine an Egypt without Mubarak. In other words, it was observed that they could imagine Egypt under a completely different regime. Yet, hardly anybody in Syria could imagine a Syria without Assad and the Ba'ath regime. They hoped instead that Assad would step down, though it was clear that this would be a difficult goal to achieve. In states like the Syrian one, "it is precisely when you pull … the regime out that it unravels" (Anderson, 2011a: 71). Hence, it is really hard to organize a widespread protest or to convince the free riders to join your cause in such states.

In the light of the above information, it seems that a perception was born that the Ba'ath party was too strong to overthrow, that the protesters were terrorists and that Syria was the subject of a Western plot. Each section adopted its own message among those and at the end of the day, many actors became hesitant in their moves. However, on the ground, the FSA continued to win many battles despite its isolation and gave Assad a hard time. I argue that if the regime was as powerful as it claimed, the problem would not have lingered this long. The regime would be expected to suppress the adversaries, considering the support behind it and the advantages it has had. As the events further deepen the schism, Assad moves farther away from being able to declare an absolute victory despite the support he receives. Despite the fictitious nature of the original portrayal of events by the government, this portrayal now has some truth to it on the ground. The regime discovered that it was impossible to suppress the people merely through violence, but continued to use violence against them in order to set the foundation for the further separation of the opposition in preparation for the possibility of a worse scenario.[390]

[390] It is claimed that the regime also works towards the division of the country by attacking the Nusayri regions to prepare for the worst, and remains silent about strengthening the Kurds in the north. At this stage, it is often expressed that the country will disintegrate over the course of time.

From another point of view, we have to see who took the advantage of the provocations. In a country where the intelligence arm is so strong, how can it be possible that the perpetrators cannot be identified? There is no answer for this question, as it is clear the intelligence arm is already aware of their identities. If the intelligence was so powerful, how could they not prevent foreign actors from being so effective on the ground? This question was frequently voiced in my interviews. It is therefore possible to interpret that, at least in the beginning, the regime was not as powerful as it was made out to be which was made clear by its inability to prevent the protests.

It seems now that it will be impossible to establish a true peace or consistency in Syria. Even if Assad steps down, the chaos will continue for much longer, just as in Afghanistan, as the schism has already solidified. The ongoing revolts reveal that the opposition could have been victorious if it hadn't been for Assad's strategies and the regime's support from foreign actors. Moreover, as the struggle continues, it is easy to see that Assad's deeds are merely a form of propaganda. We may consider this proof of the possible success of opposition if it is provided the necessary support at the right time and if Assad is not as powerful as suggested. In short, the opportunities for the opposition have been shielded from view.

At the end of the day, a false but influential perception was created. It was at least implicitly argued that Assad would not fall and as a result the alliance among the elite remained solid due to future uncertainties. In other words, the ever present opportunities became harder to identify. However, the early reality on the ground proved the existence of such opportunities. In time however, these opportunities disappeared. Over the course of three separate set of interviews conducted at different times, I observed the decrease of this belief.

In case that the foreign actors had behaved in a different manner, if they had not believed the lies of regime and had not hesitated to act, some opportunities could

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Despite the many reasons to oppose such a process, the regime will evidently follow through to completion. Therefore, even if total disintegration does not occur, it is worth noting that the regime will strive for social disengagement and instigate intense conflicts between certain groups.

have been present for the opposition. The regime could have been isolated and Iran and Russia could have withdrawn a little more. Some opportunities could have been created via support from Turkey and other actors. At least those who were interviewed perceived the situation in this way.

As a result of the years-long cooperation Egyptian civil society had with the West, the opposition in Egypt was easily able to reach Western decision-makers to communicate their own viewpoints. In the Egyptian case the US was able to get direct information from opposition forces, the case of Saad Eddin Ibrahim being a clear example of this. In the Syrian case, however, as David Mack has stressed, the supporters of the regime were successful in influencing the US (personal communication, 2012). It is easy to see that the Syrian opposition and civil society, already being weak, had difficulties expressing itself. Moreover, as the conflict grew, Assad had more time to explicate his take on the situation. Mubarak didn't have the time to do the same.

Additionally, in Syria the issue came to focus on the Islamists. This was in part due to the fact that the Islamic opposition has been absolutely alienated, pushed underground and supported by states hosting Salafi movements, such as the Gulf countries. Whereas in Egypt, it was clear that the protest wave was not just about the Muslim Brotherhood, in Syria this fact was not as clear, even with regards to the Syrian National Council. In that sense, it can be argued that the Egyptian MB acted more strategically. This was in part due to their years of experience. In Syria the opposition already lacked the power to mobilize and with the increasing violence of radical groups that utilized religious rhetoric gained ground. The history of violence against Islamic rhetoric during the 1980's set the stage for the events to be approached from a sectarian and religious perspective. This served to strengthen the regime's hand. The opposition has been unable to demonstrate thus far that the protests are not about religion or sectarianism while Egypt has been able to prove this.

If the Syrian opposition had acted together in a cohesive manner, the anti-regime movements could have been more efficient. Knowing this, the regime did all it could to break up the already fragmented opposition. The opposition in Egypt successfully

acted in a cohesive manner during the uprisings due to the previous experience of acting together. For example, the Kefayeh movement had participants from many different groups. In Syria, the opposition, due to the lack of previous experience, knew neither how to act together nor how to compromise. The Syrian opposition also couldn't use framing in an effective manner and moreover didn't have a persistent motivation. Therefore they were unsuccessful in bonding with potential allies that would support them.

In addition to the opposition's action as a whole, dispersing the alliance among the elite who supported the regime imperative in order for the public to have its demands met. Although there was the possibility that the violence would be brought to a new level by loosening the commitment between the political, economic, and military elite, who were the source of strength in the Ba'ath regime, by standing beside it, they successfully overthrew the regime. If this alliance were to end, the elements who think differently within the Ba'ath regime would be able to voice their opinions. Ending this elite alliance and acting together would give way to a change from within, which is a must since an intervention from the outside would have many handicaps.

9.4. Theoretical Implications

The issue of regime change (the leadership change within the context of this study) has considerable weight in the literature of political science. By using leadership change as proxy for understanding the continuity of authoritarian regime types, this study differs from the rest of the literature as focuses on political opportunity structures and framing rather than traditional state-society relationhip approach and authoritarianism. According to the literature, there are elements that make a leadership change easier or more difficult. Whether the polity is open to influence from the outer world may give us a clue as to whether a leadership change is likely or not. Therefore, the structure and characteristics of state institutions play a defining role in terms of the vitality of the regimes. Similarly, the alliance between the state elite and institutions also defines how the elite will respond in a possible crisis. In addition to this first group of factors that are related to the institutionalized nature of the state, the methods and strategies used by regimes in suppressing the uprisings also determine the success of the regime change. Furthermore, the factors in the first

group to a great extent determine what the factors in the second group will be. In short, the strategies regimes use to suppress uprisings in relation to the structure of the state and the attitude of the international community, are necessary elements that determine how resistant authoritarian regimes are towards political change and democratic reform.

This study systematically reveals that the Syrian regime is more inclined to use counter-framing and repression since the degree of closedness of the Syrian polity is higher, which means that the institutions are more politicized, the stability of political alignments among the elites is stronger, enough to maintain the regime's cohesiveness and the international constraints on the rulers are lower. Secondly, leadership change as a policy outcome is less likely in Syria since the Ba'ath regime is more capable of influencing the perceptions and motivations of the activists in a negative manner and the beliefs and knowledge of possible allies of the opposition in favor of the regime. Thirdly, leadership change as a policy outcome is more likely in Egypt since the openness of the polity is higher, which means that politics is highly institutionalized, elites are more flexible in terms of positioning themselves in a volatile political atmosphere and the interaction with the Western world is more profound not only in terms of the political level but also at the societal and institutional level.

Even in a superficial sense, one could say that Egypt is a more open society. What this work attempts to do is to explain the difference between the authoritarian structures in these two countries in light of the literature that focuses on the emergence of Western social movements and their interactions with the state. In this sense I posit that the main approaches of social movement literature, the 'political process' and 'framing' approaches, are able to account for the processes in Egypt and Syria, as well as systematically account for the differences between them. Therefore, if sufficient opportunities emerged in Arab countries, such as in the Egypt example, and if challengers have the necessary opportunity, experience and ability to identify these opportunities, the social movement can at least attain limited success. Similarly, as explained in the social movement approaches, if opportunities for mobilization do not emerge, the already weak social movement is unsuccessful. In short, it is not realistic to claim that the approaches which explain the emergence,

success, and failure of Western social movements and their strategies in the process are inapplicable in the Middle East, due to some inherent 'Middle East exceptionalism'. It would be more fruitful to rely on studies that draw on comparisons with other Middle Eastern countries or even authoritarian regimes from other geographies.

This study also demonstrates the necessity of conducting new research on civil-military relations in the Arab world (Also see Springborg, 2014: 152-154). The attitude of the military and that of the people towards their military should be closely scrutinized. For example, the military's attitude during the uprisings and the people's perception of the military at this juncture compared to the post-coup period in Egypt would yield important results for civil-military studies. The 18 day period in Egypt provided the military with 'political opportunity structures' that would help it to strengthen its own position and continue to pursue its interests. The post-uprising period is a clear indication of this. As the interviews point out, although the military was disturbed by the existence of Gamal Mubarak, a rift based on a clear output was not observed before the crisis (Osman, 2011). However, with the start of the crisis, the military had an opportunity to convert its situation into something positive. In Kandil's words "after having been sidelined by the security and political apparatuses for years, the military saw the revolt as an opportunity to outflank its partners and get back on top" (Kandil, 2012b: 206).

In this study I have formed an eclectic model by adding the 'framing approach' (culture) into the political process approach. This provided a more functional toolkit for explaining the crisis period in both cases, especially in Syria. It is impossible to understand the process without also accounting for culture. Therefore, I have demonstrated that combining these two approaches yielded a greater explanatory power. As Korany and al-Mahdi (2012) have outlined, combining these two approaches is an important development in increasing the explanatory power in social movement literature, particularly in authoritarian contexts.

This work argues that a 'political opportunity structure' approach could increase the analytical leverage in explaining the variation in outcomes in the Arab uprisings. In the Egyptian case, the national political opportunity structure "eventually leaned

favorably" towards the challengers, yet, in contrast, the Syrian case has enjoyed more flexibility "due to its robust ties with a vast array of powerful countries, including Russia, and China, both of which resolutely opposed any UN resolution against Syria" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 478).

In conclusion, I argue that relatively constant elements of political opportunity, the first independent variable and its defining functions, are useful in comparing the success of social movements in different settings. Yet, the volatile elements, the second independent variable and its defining functions, "are more useful in understanding the process of interaction between the opening and closing of political space" (Alimi & Meyer, 2011: 289).

On the other hand, in the Syrian crisis the state of uprising and sectarian conflict have been fused together. This continues to be the problem and it is difficult to say how this will end, especially as the sectarian conflict deepens and the influence of outside powers remains prevalent. For these reasons it is difficult to make any predictions regarding the future of the revolution (T. al-Bishry, personal communication, January 2, 2013).

Moreover, this study also confirms the general tendencies in the literature by illustrating that the 'political opportunity structures' may shift over time as a result of the cumulative consequences of state policies and the purposive actions of the society during the pre-crisis periods. In times of crisis, however, 'political opportunity structures' may shift faster. Kriesi (1995) argues that shifts in the 'political opportunity structures' at the time that the challengers engage in collective action are unlikely to occur, which means that the protesters are supposed to take the 'political opportunity structures' as given in their short term calculations. Yet, when we integrate the factor of 'culture' into the equation, it seems that sudden shifts in 'political opportunity structures' are quite possible. It depends both on the degree of the structural impact of the cumulative experience and the density of the breach. In other words, if we are talking about structural impact, then we may observe unexpected shifts in the political opportunity structure. If the protesters are motivated enough and if the state is in a state of *liminality,* (which depends on the coherence of the state institutions) then sudden shifts are more likely. The larger the concentration

and motivation of the protesters, the more likely it is that there will be shifts in the ’political opportunity structures’. The strategies of the authorities and those of the opposition are mutually independent from each other, particularly in times of crisis.

In Egypt, the situation is very different from any other ‘Arab Spring’ country. Many countries are experiencing serious problems, sectarian or tribal demands, rifts between the old regime and the new, and sectarian and tribal conflicts. Whereas other revolutions have experienced such troubles, Egypt has avoided them. This is because neither tribes nor sects have any influence in Egyptian politics, with the main problem being the dire socio-economic situation. In Pierrett’s words:

> Many of the factors that have been frequently invoked to account for the resilience of the Syrian regime were also present in Mubarak’s Egypt: crony businessmen and a wealthy middle class that has benefitted from economic liberalization, much more so in Egypt than in Syria; a non-Muslim population that is anxious at the possible rise of the Islamists after the revolution; and a sizeable bureaucracy and a hegemonic party with considerable patronage capacities. Yet, none of these factors had any positive impact upon the resilience of Mubarak, which means that the cause for Assad’s resilience should be sought elsewhere, looking into the kin-based character of the military (Abu-Khalil, 2013).

Or from a different point of view as Hinnebusch (2012: 106) states:

> He [Bashar al-Assad] had positioned himself as balancer above a divided society, propagating an image of himself as both a modern and a pious Muslim. Compared to those of other Arab republics, the regime enjoyed a foreign policy congruent with public opinion, a young president still enjoying the benefit of the doubt and seen as preferable to alternatives in the regime, security forces more loyal and effective than elsewhere, a weaker civil society and a more fragmented opposition.

The removal of the leader can appropriately be interpreted as a policy decision that the state has the ability to adopt. In general terms, this study has investigated the fundamental dynamics surrounding the decision of whether to overthrow or keep the ruler in these two countries. In fact, the events do not represent an all-out revolution

whereby the state, with all its institutions, has failed completely. Rather, in countries where state institutions are not as politicized and have acquired some degree of autonomy, and therefore have greater difficulties in quelling the uprisings, the decision to dispose of the leader is more readily implementable. Alternatively, in countries where the state's institutions are less autonomous and its institutional functioning is more coherent, such policies are not adopted as they are capable of implementing harsh and clear policies to suppress the uprisings.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF EGYPTIAN INTERVIEWEES (*in alphabetical order*)

1. Dr. Abdulmawgoud Dardery, *Political Scientist and Politician*, Spokesperson of Foreign Relations Committee, Freedom and Justice Party, April 24, 2013, Istanbul.
2. *Ret. General* Dr. Adel Soliman, Executive Manager of International Center for Future and Strategic Studies, December 23, 2012, Cairo.
3. Dr. Ahmed Ban, *Political Researcher* (a former Muslim Brotherhood member), Nile Center for Strategic Studies, December 19, 2012, Cairo.
4. Ahmed Zahran, *Political Activist*, al-Baradei Group, December 12, 2012, Cairo.
5. Dr. Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *Political Scientist and Former Minister of Culture*, Cairo University, Deceember 24, 2012, Cairo.
6. Amr Mousa, *Politician/Bureaucrat*, Former Head of Arab League and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, January 2, 2013, Cairo
7. Dr. Amr al-Shubaky, *Political Scientist, Political Activist and Politician*, Director of Arab Forum for Alternative, December 25, 2012, Cairo.
8. Dr. Bahgat Korany, *Political Scientist*, American University in Cairo, December 12, 2012, Cairo
9. Cehad al-Haddad, *Politician*, Senior Advisor to Freedom and Justice Party, December 26, 2012, Cairo.
10. Emad el-Sayed Ahmed, *Political Analyst*, Editor in Chief of *al-Syasy*, December 13, 2012, Cairo.
11. Dr. Fouad el-Said, *Political Researcher*, The National Center for Social and Criminal Research, December 18, 2012, Cairo.
12. Ferid Ibrahim, *Journalist*, Deputy Editor in Chief of *al-Cumhoriyya*, December 24, 2012, Cairo.
13. Geoerge Ishak, *Political Activist and Politician*, Co-founder of *Kefaya* Movement, December 26, 2012, Cairo.

14. Dr. Georges Fahmi, *Political Activist and Political Scientist*, Arab Forum for Alternative, December 25, 2012, Cairo.

15. Dr. Hisham Kemal, *Politician,* Former Spokesperson of *Cephe Salafiyya*, December 18, 2012, Cairo.

16. Magdy al-Gallad, *Journalist*, Editor in Chief of Vatan Daily, December 17, 2012, Cairo.

17. Mahmoud Shermini, *Politician*, Deputy General Secretary of Vasat Party, January 2, 2013, Cairo.

18. Mahmoud Sultan, *Journalist*, Deputy Editor in Chief of *Al-Masriyyoon*, December 16, 2012, Cairo.

19. Memduh el-Veli, *Journalist,* Head of Al-Ahram Media Corporation, December 13, 2012, Cairo.

20. Mohammed al-Samman, *Politician and Political Activist* (a former member of Muslim Brotherhood), December 8, 2012, Cairo.

21. Mohammed Mahdi Akef, *Politician and opinion leader*, Former Head (*Murshid*) of Muslim Brotherhood, December 20, 2012, Cairo.

22. *Ret. General* Dr. Mohamed Qadri Said, *Military Advisor*, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, January 3, 2013, Cairo.

23. *Ret. General* Dr. Mohamed M. el-Zayat, Chairman of National Center for Middle East Studies, January 3, 2013, Cairo.

24. Mostafa Zahran, *Researcher and Journalist*, News Editor at *al-Masrriyyoon*, January 4, 2013, Cairo.

25. Muhammed Abdel Kader, *Political Researcher*, Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, January 3, 2013, Cairo.

26. Dr. Muhamed Imara, *Opinion leader*, a prominent Islamic scholar, January 3, 2013, Cairo.

27. Muntazzar Zeyyad, *Political Activist* (a former member of *Cihad al-Islami*), December 20, 2012, Cairo.

28. Dr. Nadia Mustafa, *Political Scientist*, Cairo University, Director of Civilization Center for Political Studies, December 19, 2012, Cairo.

29. Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Political Activist and Sociologist*, Chairman of Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, December 13,, 2012, Cairo.

30. Dr. Salah Abd Elkareem, *Political Activist* (a former member of Muslim Brotherhood), Deputy of the Engineer Syndicate, December, 10, 2012, Cairo.

31. Dr. Seyfaddin Abdel Fettah, *Political Scientist* at Cairo University and a former advisor to President Mursi, May 4, 2014, Istanbul.

32. Tamim Heikal, *Political Activist*, December 21, 2012, Cairo.

33. Dr. Tariq al-Bishry, *Opinion leader*, Former Deputy of Council of State, A prominent Islamic scholar, January 2, 2013, Cairo.

34. Tariq al-Kholi, *Political Activist*, Co-founder of 6 April Movement, December 20, 2012, Cairo.

35. Yaser Abdul Tevvab, *Politician*, Spokesperson of Nur Party, December 19, 2012, Cairo.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF SYRIAN INTERVIEWEES (*in alphabetical order*)

1. A *defected Syrian judge* from the court of Aleppo, February 19, 2013, Reyhanlı, Turkey.
2. A *defected Syrian prosecutor* from Aleppo, February 19, 2013, Reyhanlı, Turkey.
3. A *defected Syrian judge*, Head of Union of Free Prosecutors and Judges, February 19 and October 24, 2013, Reyhanlı, Turkey.
4. A *Free Syrian Army commander*, January 31, 2013, Tel Abyad, Syria.
5. A *Free Syrian Army soldier*, January 31, 2013, Tel Abyad, Syria.
6. A group of Syrian *businessmen* from Aleppo, February 19, 2013, Reyhanlı, Turkey.
7. A *member of Free Syrian Army media committee*, January 31, 2013, Tel Abyad, Syria.
8. A *military commander* of Ahrar al-Sham, January 31, 2013, Tel Abyad, Syria.
9. Dr. A. Sadreddin al-Beyanuni, *Politician and Opinion Leader*, Former Head (Murshid) of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and a member of Syrian National Council, January 21, 2013, Istanbul, Turkey.
10. A Syrian *businessman*, January 7, 2013, Amman, Jordan.
11. A Syrian *fighter/activist/cihadist* from Der'a, February 20, 2013, Hatay, Turkey.
12. A Syrian *fighter/activist/cihadist* from Humus, February 20, 2013, Hatay, Turkey.
13. A *Syrian resident (a physicist)* of Oncupinar refugee camp, February 1, 2013, Kilis, Turkey.
14. A Syrian *tribal leader*, January 31, 2013, Tel Abyad, Syria.
15. Abd Alqader Zizan, *Freelance journalist*, January 7, 2013, Amman, Jordan.
16. Abdullah Sakallı, *Political Activist* (a defected imam working as a judge for FSA), February 18, 2013, Güveççi, Yayladağı, Hatay, Turkey.
17. Ahmed Eyyad, *Political Activist* from Humus, April 2012, Ankara, Turkey.

18. Ali al-Bash, *Politician/Bureaucrat,* A defected member of Syrian Parliament and a prominent tribal sheik, February 19, 2013, Hatay, Turkey.

19. Ahmed Bakeer, *Defected judge* from the court of Aleppo, February 19 and October 24, 2013, Reyhanlı, Turkey.

20. Ali Öztürkmen, *Political Activist,* Former Head *Majlis al-Turkmone al-Suri*, October 14, 2011, Ankara, Turkey.

21. Basel Hefar, *Syrian freelance journalist*, September 19, 2012, Ankara, Turkey.

22. Dr. Bassma Kodmani, *Politician and Political Scientist*, Former Spokeswoman of Syrian National Council, Director of Arab Reform Initiative, November 13, 2014, via Skype.

23. Dr. Burhan Ghallioun, *Politician and Political Scientist,* Former Head of Syrian National Council, University of Sorbonne, November 23, 2014, via email.

24. Dr. Cemal al-Skarty, A Syrian Sufi *sheik*, January 8, 2013, Amman, Jordan.

25. Falah Abdol Karim Ajil al-Jarba, Opinion Leader and a prominent Syrian tribal Sheikh (*Shammar*), March 20, 2012, Istanbul, Turkey; January 3, 2015, Beirut, Lebanon.

26. Fayez Amro, *Defected General*, Head of *Majlis al-Turmane al-Suri*, November 6, 2013, Ankara.

27. Hamzah Ghadban, *a Syrian journalist and Political Activist*, January 7, 2013; January 4-5-6, 2015, Amman.

28. Dr. Hasan Hashemete, *Political activist,* one of the exile leaders of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and a member of Syrian National Council, April 24, 2013, Istanbul.

29. Mohammed Barmu, *Politician,* Defected Member of the Syrian Parliament and Head of National Development Party, January, 5 and 7, 2013, Amman, Jordan.

30. Mohammed Sermini, *Political Activist and Politician,* Member of Syrian National Council, October 27, 2011, Ankara.

31. Omar al-Kamal, A Syrian *Political Activist* from Lathkiya, January 8, 2013, Amman.

32. Osama Mollawe, *Politician*, Head of Political Committee, *Hay'al al-Inkaz al-Suriya*, December 26, 2012, Cairo.

33. Osmanhan Suleiman, *Political Activist*, General Manager, Syrian Youth Association for Relief (Syrian National Council), October 21, 2013, Gaziantep, Turkey.

34. Dr. Samer al-Taqi, *Politician and Researcher*, former advisor to President Assad and a former member of the Syrian Parliament, General Manager of Orient Research Center, April 24, 2013, Istanbul; February 2, 2015, Ankara.

35. Samer Araabi, *Political activist*, Advocacy Manager, Assistance Coordination Unit (Syrian National Council), October 21, 2013, Gaziantep, Turkey.

36. Dr. Velid Ridvan, *Historian*, September 14, 2012, Ankara.

37. Dr. Yaseen Ghadban, *Opinion leader* and one of the senior leaders of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (exiled since 1982), January 8, 2013, Amman, Jordan.

APPENDIX C: LIST OF THE OTHER CONTRIBUTORS AND INTERVIEWEES

- Carole O'leary (National Defense University, Washington, D.C., US)
- General (R) Cemal Hasan (Iraqi Army)
- Hatem Mukhlis (Iraqi Politician)
- Hosam Ghadban (Deputy Leader of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood)
- Khidhir al-Douri (Former Governor of Diyala)
- Lina Khatib (Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut)
- Misbah Ahdab (Former Member of the Lebanese Parliament)
- Muhammed Nureddin (Professor at Lebanon University)
- General Raad Al-Hamdani (A Former General from the Iraqi army)
- Rabee F. Al-Hafidh (Centre of Islamic studies (CIS))
- Salam Kawakibi (President of Initiative for a New Syria)
- Sami Zubadia (Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck, University of London)
- Yahya Ismail al-Sonbol (Secretary General of Iraqi Revolution Tribal Sheiks Council)
- Amb. (R) Yaşar Yakış (Former Foreign Minister of Turkey)
- Yazid Sayigh (Senior Associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut)

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ENGLISH)

Interview Questions

Part 1: The structure and basic properties of the state, the state institutions and the state elite within a historical context

Please share your view in particular on the roles played by the president, institutions and elites.

1. Could you please describe the main dynamics of intra-institutional relations in the state of Egypt when you look at its development in the last 40 years in terms of power sharing mechanisms and legitimacy?

    - *How would you describe the regime's relations with the army and other institutions?*
    - *How has the formal institutional structure been shaped? (ideology, ethnicity, sectarian affiliation)*
    - *How have the existing institutions and their general characteristics affected the structure of the state?*
    - *What does "head of state" or "president" mean within this system?*
    - *What are the main elements of legitimacy?*
    - *What are the main motivations of the institutions that are cooperating?*

2. What are the principal dynamics of elite alliance in Egypt? How powerful are the co-optation policies?
    - *How would you characterize interaction between the political and the economic elite?*

- *Do you observe any conflict among the elite during the last years of Mubarak?*

3. Egypt is an ally of the West, particularly the US for more than 40 years. Do you observe any impact of this relationship in the state institutions and elite mentality? How do you assess this interaction with the Western world?
    - *Which institutions have been more inclined (open) to Western influence?*
    - *Why have certain institutions been more inclined to Western influence?*
    - *Do you think characteristics of the relations with the external world have an impact on the legitimacy*

Part 2: State-Society Relations and the Opposition

1. How do you define the traditional/usual Egyptian opposition prior to the Arab Spring?
    - *What are the main resources of this opposition?*
    - *Who were the main actors?*

2. How would you describe the regime's primary policies/strategies towards the opposition and the civil society prior to the Arab Spring?

    - *To what degree has the opposition been allowed?*
    - *What kind of instruments of oppression was there and in which areas was its presence felt the most?*
    - *How would you describe the regime's relations with NGO's and other associations? (Professional and trade associations, bar associations, labour unions)*

3. How do you assess the impacts of the interactions with the external world on the society? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

4. Was 2011 a meltdown that occurred overnight or were there any turning points for the social and political movements during 2000s?

    - *To what extent did the opposition groups have pre-existing ties and organizations?*
    - *How powerful were the social networks, what kind of an experience was there?*

Part 3: Arab Spring

1. What were the primary reasons for the people to take to the streets in 2011 and what was the initial aim? Who were there on the streets?
    - *Has this initial aim evolved over time?*

2. What were the primary strategies of the protestors?

    - *How do they decide what tactics to deploy?*

3. How and through which instruments did the protestors frame (portray/characterize) Mubarak, regime and the state?
    - *Main slogans, main instruments*
    - *Were there any religious connotations in these?*
    - *How did they identify themselves?*

4. What did the protestors/opposition do in order to gain the support of other parts of the society? What were the main motivating and de-motivating factors for these different parts?

    - *What were the motivations and reasons for those people who did not support the protests? For example did not they believe that something could be genuinely changed?*
    - *Do you think that past experiences had an impact on the motivation of the people?*

Part 4: Interaction between the Movement and the Countermovement during the events

1. In a relatively short period of time Mubarak was forced to step down. Why has the removal of Mubarak taken shorter period of time compared to Syria? What are the main factors?
   During the protests in Tahrir Square:
   - *How did the state institutions act, what were their main strategies and the primary reasons for their attitude during the uprisings?*
   - *How did the dynamics of the elite alliances affect the way in which the different aspects of the elite respond to the protests?*
   - *And to what extend did the alliance among the elite continue?*
   - *Why did the army take a different stance towards the protestors?*
   - *Why did the West give up on Mubarak?*

2. What are the primary factors that made it harder for the regime to rely on violence? Please take the external and internal dynamics into account.

   - *How have the historical relations with the west we have mentioned above, constrained or otherwise affected the regimes reflexes (its strategies and methods) in response to the protests? Could we say that these relations have eased the process?*
   - *Intra-institutional rift (crack, split between the different institutions of the state).*

3. How do you assess (react to) the international media's approach to the events?

   - *Could the opposition get the support of the international media, in the way that they wanted to?*

4. How were the protestors framed by the regime? Which tools were used? (Media etc.)

- *Would you say that everyone within the regime accepted these characterizations of the regime?*
- *How do you think the regime utilized the international media?*

5. In what ways do you think that the strategies (repression, counter-framing, etc.) implemented by the regime affected:
   a) the ability of activists to shape and frame the terms of the debate. The perceptions and motivations of the activists
   b) the structure of elite alliances and the perceptions of the different groups within the society and the political scene (possible alliances)
   c) positions of the external actors
      - *How did the statements of Mubarak and the other officials during the uprisings affect different segments of the society?*

6. How do you assess the involvement and approaches of external actors (the USA, Iran, Russia and Turkey) to what happened in Tahrir Square? How did their approaches affect the perceptions and motivations of the people (not only the protestors but also the possible supporters of the protestors)?

Comparing with Syria

What are the primary factors that differentiate Egypt from Syria?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ARABIC)

أسئلة المقابلة

الجزء الأول: الخصائص الهيكلية والأساسية للدولة، لمؤساسات الدولة، ولنخب الدولة من خلال منظار تاريخي.

الرجاء شارك برأيك في ما يخص الأدوار التي يلعبها الرئيس، المؤسسات والنخب.

1- هل من الممكن فضلا وصف الديناميات الأساسية للعلاقات بين المؤسسات في مصر عندما تنظر اليها من خلال الـ40 سنة الماضية فيما يتعلق بآلية تقاسم السلطة والشرعية؟

- كيف تصف علاقات النظام مع الجيش والمؤسسات الأخرى؟
- كيف تمّ توليف هيكيلية المؤسسات الرسمية؟ (الأيديولوجيا، الاثنية، الانتماء الطائفي)
- كيف أثّرت المؤسسات الموجودة خاليا والخصائص المرتبطة بها على هيكلية الدولة؟
- ما هو موقع "قائد الدولة" أو "الرئيس" في هذا النظام؟
- ما هي عناصر الشرعيّة الأساسية؟
- ما هي الدوافع الأساسية للمؤسسات التي تتعاون في هذا الشأن؟

2- من هي الديناميات الأساسية لتحالف النخب في مصر؟ كم هي قوية سياسات التعاون برأيك؟

- كيف تشخّص التفاعل بين النخب السياسية والاقتصادية؟
- هل تلاحظ أي نزاع بين النخب خلال العشرة سنوات الأخيرة من حكم مبارك؟

3- مصر حليفة للغرب خاصة خلال بالنسبة للولايات المتحدة الأمريكية خلال أكثر من 40 عاما. هل تلاحظ أي تأثير لهذه العلاقة على مؤسسات الدولة وعلى عقلية النخب؟
كيف تقيّم هذا التفاعل مع الغرب؟

- ـأي من المؤسسات كانت معرضة أكثر أو منفتحة أكثر على التأثير الغربي؟
- لماذا كانت بعض المؤسسات أكثر عرضة أو انفتاحا على التأثير الأجنبي؟

- هل تعتقد أنّ خصائص العلاقات مع العالم الخارجي لها تأثير على الشرعية؟

الجزء الثاني: العلاقات بين الدولة والمجتمع، والمعارضة

1- كيف يمكن أن تعرّف المعارضة المصرية التقليدية قبل الربيع العربي؟
- ما هي المصادر الأساسية لهذه المعارضة
- من هم الفاعلين الأساسيين؟

2- كيف تصف سياسات النظام الأوليّة واستراتيجياته المتّبعة اتجاه المعارضة والمجتمع المدني قبل الربيع العربي؟
- لأي درجة تم السماح للمعارضة بالعمل؟
- ماهو نوع أدوات القمع التي كانت تستخدم وفي أي المجالات كان يعتقد أنها الأكثر فعالية؟
- كيف يمكن وصف علاقات النظام مع المنظمات غير الحكومية والهيئات الأخرى؟ (الهيئات الاحترافية والتجارية، واتحادات ونقابات العمل؟

3- كيف تقيّم تأثيرات التفاعل مع العالم الخارجي على المجتمع؟ ما هي الايجابيات والسلبيات؟

4- هل حصل الانهيار عام 2011 بشكل سريع خلال أيام أم أنّه جاء نتيجة أي نقطة تحوّل للحركات الاجتماعية والسياسية خلال العقد الماضي؟
- الى أي حد كان لمجموعات المعارضة روابط سابقة وتنظيم؟
- الى أي حد كانت الشبكات الاجتماعية قوية، ما هو نوع الخبرة التي كانت؟

الجزء الثالث الربيع العربي

1- ما هي الأسباب الرئيسية التي دفعت الناس الى الشارع في عام 2011 وما كان الهدف الأوّلي؟ ومن كان في الشارع تحديدا؟
- هل تطوّر الهدف الأوّلي مع الوقت؟

2- ما هي الاستراتيجيات الرئيسية التي كانت سائدة لدى المتظاهرين؟
- كيف قرروا ما هي التكتيكات التي يجب الاعتماد عليها بالضبط ؟

3- كيف وبأي أدوات قاموا المتظاهرون بتشخيص أو وصف أو اظهار صورة مبارك، النظام، والدولة؟
- الشعارات الرئيسية، الادوات الرئيسية
- هل كان هناك أي دلالات دينية فيها؟
- كيف عرّفوا أنفسهم؟

4- ماذا فعل المتظاهرون – المعارضة من اجل كسب دعم الفئات الأخرى في المجتمع؟ ماذا كانت العوامل الأساسية المحفّزة أو تلك المنفّرة لهذه المجموعات المختلفة؟
- ماذا كانت الدوافع والأسباب لهؤلاء الناس الذين لم يدعموا المظاهرات؟ على سبيل المثال، هل كانوا يؤمنون بأنه لا يمكن تحقيق شيء جدّي في التغيير عبر هذه الطريقة؟
- هل تعتقد أنّ للتجارب الماضية تأثير أو وقع على دوافع الناس؟

الجزء الرابع: التفاعل بين الحركة والحركة المضادة خلال الأحداث

1- خلال فترة قصيرة نسبيا، أُجبر مبارك على التنحي. لماذا برأيك استغرق تنحي مبارك عن الحكم فترة أقصر مقارنة بسوريا؟ ما هي العوامل الرئيسية؟
خلال مظاهرات ميدان التحرير:
- كيف تصرفت مؤسسات الدولة؟ ماذا كانت استراتيجياتهم الأساسية وما كان الهدف الأساسي لسلوكهم وتصرفهم هذا خلال المظاهرات؟

- كيف أثرت ديناميات تحالف النخب على الكيفية التي ردّت بها الشرائح المختلفة من النخب على التظاهرات؟
- الى أي حد استمر التحالف بين النخب؟
- لماذا قام الجيش باتخاذ موقف مختلف تجاه المتظاهرين؟
- لماذا تخلى الغرب عن مبارك؟

2- ما هي العوامل الرئيسية التي جعلت من الصعب على النظام الاعتماد على العنف؟ الرجاء أخذ الديناميات الداخلية والخارجية بعين الاعتبار عند الاجابة

- كيف قيّدت العلاقات التاريخية مع الغرب أو على العكس أثّرت على ردود فعل النظام، على استراتيجياته، وعلى طرقه في التعامل مع التظاهرات؟ هل يمكننا القول بانّ هذه العلاقات سهّلت عملية رحيل النظام؟
- انشقاق داخل المؤسسات المختلفة في الدولة

3- كيف تقيّم نظرة الاعلام العالمي للأحداث؟

- هل استطاعت المعارضة الحصول على دعم الاعلام العالمي بالشكل الذي كانت تريده؟

4- كيف كانت مقاربة النظام للمظاهرات؟ ما هي الادوات التي اعتمد عليها؟ (الاعلام...ألخ)

- هل يمكن القول بانّ كل من في النظام وافق أو قبل بالطريقة التي شخّص بها النظام هذه التظاهرات؟
- كيف تعتقد انّ النظام استطاع استغلال الاعلام العالمي برأيك؟

5- برأيك، كيف أثّرت الطرق التي استخدمها النظام من استراتيجيات (القمع، المواجهة، تصوير التظاهرات..ألخ)، على:

أ- قدرة الناشطين على صياغة وتأطير الحوار. التصورات والدوافع المتعلقة بهم

ب- بنية تحالف النخب وتصور المجموعات المختلفة ضمن المجتمع والمشهد السياسي (التحالفات المحتملة)

ج- موقف الفاعلين من الخارج

- كيف أثّرت تصريحات مبارك وغيره من المسؤولين خلال الانتفاضة على شرائح المجتمع المختلفة؟

6- كيف تقيّم تدّخل ونظرة الفاعلين من الخارج (أمريكا، ايران، روسيا وتركيا) تجاه ما حصل في ميدان التحرير؟ كيف أثّرت نظرتهم على تصزرات ودوافع الناس (ليس فقط على المتظاهرين منهم وانما على المناصرين المحتملين لهم)؟

مقارنة بسوريا

ما هي العوامل الرئيسية التي تميّز الحالة المصرية عن نظريتها السورية؟