Edited by Frédéric Volpi and James M. Jasper

Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings

Mapping Interactions between Regimes and Protesters

Amsterdam
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Protest and Social Movements

Recent years have seen an explosion of protest movements around the world, and academic theories are racing to catch up with them. This series aims to further our understanding of the origins, dealings, decisions, and outcomes of social movements by fostering dialogue among many traditions of thought, across European nations and across continents. All theoretical perspectives are welcome. Books in the series typically combine theory with empirical research, dealing with various types of mobilization, from neighborhood groups to revolutions. We especially welcome work that synthesizes or compares different approaches to social movements, such as cultural and structural traditions, micro- and macro-social, economic and ideal, or qualitative and quantitative. Books in the series will be published in English. One goal is to encourage non-native speakers to introduce their work to Anglophone audiences. Another is to maximize accessibility: all books will be available in open access within a year after printed publication.

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For all those who have fought, and sometimes died,
for their rights and dreams

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Preface

This book originated in a roundtable discussion at the annual convention of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), in Washington, DC, in November 2014. The roundtable itself was an attempt to apply social movement theory to the 2011 Arab uprising, as well as to bring the Arab uprisings into social movement theory. Charlie Kurzman and Frédéric Volpi were the initial instigators, soon joined by Jim Jasper, Jeff Goodwin, Farhad Khosrokhavar, and Wendy Pearlman.

The lively and productive dialogue at the MESA conference encouraged us to develop this project further. The roundtable revealed the widespread dissatisfaction – among both speakers and the audience – with the way that crude structural models of social mobilization were commonly invoked to explain protest mobilization during and after the Arab uprisings. This initial dissatisfaction turned into an effort to outline more useful alternative approaches.

While not all of the participants to the roundtable were able to contribute to this edited volume, other scholars who had not attended the initial conference came on board, namely Jillian Schwedler, John Chalcraft, and Youssef El Chazli.

Through our joint efforts, we hope to provide signposts for theories of mobilization that ground themselves on microinteractions between pro- and anti-regime actors. The contributions to the book thus capture and analyze very specific episodes of contestation in different parts of the Middle East since 2011. While the book explicitly seeks to deepen the relationship between social movement perspectives and Middle Eastern specialism, it is also designed to show the general conceptual and analytical relevance of these perspectives for the study of social mobilization and political change.

To stress the multifaceted relevance of this microinteractionist approach, the chapters were not compiled as a systematic account of protest events in the countries of the Middle East at the time of the Arab uprisings. Instead, we selected different types of protest mobilization, whether successful or not, by different types of players, within and across the countries of the region.

Rather than provide a review of significant protest movements in the Middle East, we sought to illustrate and analyze how social mobilization was constructed (and deconstructed) by the players in different political arenas. We illustrate the dynamics of how authoritarianisms were challenged by both strategic and accidental interactions between multiple players during the crisis events that constitute the Arab uprisings.

Frédéric Volpi and James M. Jasper

Introduction

Rethinking Mobilization after the Arab Uprisings[1]

James M. Jasper and Frédéric Volpi

Abstract

This introduction critically reviews the insights provided by mainstream social movement theory on the mobilization processes of the Arab uprisings. To address their limitations, the chapter outlines an interactionist perspective grounded in the relationship between pro- and anti-regime players across different arenas. This focus on the microfoundations of political action documents how the different players involved viewed their actions and that of others. In this perspective, addressing the interactions between players requires considering a wide range of factors, from emotional reactions to confusion, that shape strategic choices. Constructing an explanation from the ground up enables us to explain more systematically the patterns of social mobilization and state responses observed during such waves of protests.

Keywords: social movement theory, players and arenas, microfoundations of political action, Middle East politics, Arab uprisings

> "Opportunities multiply as they are seized."
> – Sun Tzu

The protests that spread across North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 were one of the great explosions of political activity in modern history, comparable to 1848 or 1989. The world watched as regimes were overthrown in four countries, and extensive protests occurred in a dozen more. Hopefully dubbed the "Arab Spring," most of these movements have been deeply disappointed and some violently repressed. Even today several countries continue to be devastated by civil wars. The democratic transition in Tunisia is the only clear political advance so far.

The world's fascination is proven by hundreds of articles and books, published in dozens of languages, about the uprisings and their outcomes. Many are broad overviews, often written in the first flush of excitement in or after 2011, which tried to make sense of events by placing them in grand metanarratives of history or general theories of social change and revolution. Most of the early work was written by popular journalists, or by scholars writing popular journalism. Outside observers initially attributed the uprisings to broad structural developments such as food insecurity (Harrigan 2014), overeducated and underemployed youth (Murphy 2012), neoliberalism (Talani 2014), or information and communication technologies (Hussain and Howard 2013).

Enough time has passed for us to dig deeper, using the research tools of social science to pinpoint specific causal dynamics of the uprisings. Careful interviews, surveys, and ethnographic immersion can be linked to sophisticated theories of human action and politics. In most cases, fine-grained micro-level descriptions can and should replace crude macro-level correlations (Schwedler 2015). Historians of political science will recognize echoes of the behavioral revolution of the 1950s, although that effort was limited by the crude theories of emotion, cognition, and culture available at the time (Dahl 1961). Revolutions in each of those fields have provided us with a wealth of new conceptual tools for understanding the microfoundations of political action.

The evidence obtained during or just after the Arab uprisings can shed light on scholarly theories of protest, revolution, and democratization. Every great wave of activity forces us to refashion our theories. Just as 1848 gave us crowd theories, fascism inspired mass-society theories, and 1968 suggested new-social-movement theory, so scholars must pour over what we know about the Arab uprisings in order to revise our own theories of politics. We hope this book can at least cheer on that long process, pointing in some directions it is already taking.

From Structures to Arenas

Twenty years ago there was more consensus, at least in the United States, over how to study protest and political contention. The political-process paradigm of social movements reached its peak in 1996, with the publication of Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer Zald's edited volume, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Resource-mobilization and political-opportunity theories coalesced, with culture thrown in as well, to establish the main outlines of an "emerging synthesis" of how scholars would henceforth explain social movements and related phenomena. The three basic building blocks were political opportunity structures, which summarized what was important about the external political environment, mobilizing structures, which were the networks and other factors that helped people to assemble, and cultural frames to acknowledge some subjective element.[2]

Although this structural framework inspired vast quantities of research – continuing today – cracks in the edifice appeared immediately. In the volume itself, David Meyer and William Gamson (1996) wondered if the concept of political opportunity structures had not been overextended to cover too many diverse phenomena, soaking up all the explanatory power in many models. Goodwin and Jasper (1999) soon attacked the entire paradigm as overly structural, ignoring strategic, emotional, and most cultural dimensions of protest. Two years later McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), the leading architects of political process theory, retreated to the concept of mechanisms in an effort to breathe more dynamism and culture into what they now admitted had been overly structural theories.

Efforts to rethink the idea of political opportunity structures have taken three main forms. One was to acknowledge the cultural work that goes into opportunities: they are not objective moments when structures open up, regardless of people's ideas about them; instead, protestors can create them with the right interpretive work, including emotions. They are subjective openings that need to be imagined, and they depend on decisions made by all the players in several arenas (Goodwin and Jasper 2012; Kurzman 2004a).

A second frequent response to criticism was to distinguish different types of opportunity structures, such as discursive opportunity structures,

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2   In line with true structuralism, political opportunity structures were supposed to be entirely objective. McAdam insisted that the "kinds of structural changes and power shifts that are most defensibly conceived of as *political* opportunities should not be confused with the collective processes by which these changes are interpreted and framed" (1996, 25-26).

emotional opportunity structures, legal opportunity structures, or corporate opportunity structures. This proliferation was a tacit recognition of the other players in the environment for protestors: corporate opportunities were actually the goals and strategic moves of corporations; legal opportunities were changes in formal laws or their interpretations; and so on. The structural language was kept, limiting the analysis of these other players as players. Other players' decisions and actions were still merely external "opportunity structures" for protestors.

A third approach was to specify political structures in more detail. Amenta (2006) offered a political mediation model in which strategies must be matched to specific arenas, replacing the language of political opportunity structures with concepts more familiar in political science such as electoral laws and the goals of coalitions of legislators (Amenta et al. 2002). Bloom (2015) argues that political opportunities favor some *tactics* over others, rather than favoring particular *groups*, while Boudreau (2004) suggests that regimes often choose between repressing certain groups or repressing certain tactics (with the aim of "crafting" nonthreatening forms of political contention).

McAdam traded in the language of political opportunity structures, which he had largely promulgated (McAdam 1982), for that of fields (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Borrowed from Bourdieu, who used the idea mostly to analyze intellectual production rather than directly political interactions (Bourdieu 1993), the term "field" focuses on competition among individuals, but also recognizes that there can be different kinds of players in the same field. This was a useful step beyond the image of a social movement facing its structural environment, allowing us to view that environment as populated by many different types of players.

Fields are social structure, not political structure, and run some risk of circularity: social structure is meant to explain patterns of behavior, yet social structure consists of those patterns of behavior. Bourdieu avoided circularity through the idea of types of capital, which players can bring with them from the outside, and with habitus, the dispositions and skills they deploy in their fields. But often the social skills useful in a field are specific to that field, returning to a kind of circular model. Formal rules are mostly imposed from the outside in Bourdieu's fields, by the state. Fligstein and McAdam try to build more rules into their idea of a field, but in the end it remains social structure: any interaction between two players is its own field, they say, with the result that there are millions of fields in a society.

Fields share many of the limitations of the concept of institutions, a more traditional attempt to describe at the same time patterns of action

and the norms and rules that govern them. In the hands of Talcott Parsons, institutions were the embodiment of underlying values through the norms and roles that apply them to concrete situations. According to his critics, such as Philip Selznick and Alvin Gouldner, there is less consensus over those values than Parsons assumed, and in fact institutions are frequently riddled with conflict. These scholars shifted from institutions to formal organizations to show that not all organizations are well institutionalized in the sense of having shared norms.

The next swing of the intellectual pendulum brought neo-institutionalism, which restored some of the consensus that Parsons had posited, while replacing its basis; it was no longer grounded on some mysterious moral values, but on shared cognitive understandings (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). This was in line with the cultural turn in the social sciences (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

The terminologies of fields and institutions were naturally combined in "institutional fields." As Verta Taylor and Mayer Zald (2010, 307) put it, echoing Fligstein and McAdam, "The institutional field in which a social movement mobilizes includes a large array of actors held together by common cultural understandings, practices, and rules, but it may also be driven by conflicting logics and beliefs about how practices and roles tied to the institution ought to be enacted." The institutional tradition emphasizes those common understandings and practices, while the field tradition highlights conflict (although that conflict is often seen as occurring alongside many shared understandings). In our view, we need to distinguish the rules and traditions of arenas from the norms and expectations of players, who often break the rules or create new arenas. Subalterns, hoping to remake arenas to their own liking, may follow different norms than elites, and the new arenas may reflect different institutional traditions.

A vocabulary of players and arenas has emerged in recent years as a commonsense effort to integrate insights into political structure derived from process and field theory with cultural insights into the construction of players and their goals, while not conflating the two (Duyvendak and Jasper 2015; Jasper and Duyvendak 2015). Arenas are *designated physical places where decisions are made*, with a variety of objects ranging from quotes chiseled into the walls to doors and seats, but also with formal rules, informal expectations, and supportive technologies, as well as with something at stake in the decisions made. (Although some authors use the term more metaphorically, or as an aggregate, such as public opinion or the media as arenas (Duyvendak and Fillieule 2015).) The players need not be copresent, as decisions can be made via the internet in a dispersed fashion. Arenas contain players with different roles and different strengths:

there is no assumption of fairness or equality among them. (There are also backstages where important preparation or morale building takes place, such as fundraisers or pep talks, but they do not involve interaction with other players.)

Players consist of individuals or groups *who have some sense of a shared identity, some shared goals, and who cooperate in at least one arena* (usually several arenas at the same time, and sometimes in different roles: as spectators in some arenas, direct players in others, judges and referees, advisors, and so on (Amenta, Caren, and Tierney 2015)). Both players and arenas reflect the weight of history: of past decisions, accumulations, understandings and expectations, physical stockpiles – an interactive approach does not assume that each interaction starts from scratch, ready to be defined and negotiated willy-nilly.

By reflecting history, both arenas and players contain some structural influences, but they bring these to bear on concrete interactions. Resources such as money are distributed according to laws, coercion, and past interactions (or the vague term "capitalism"), but they only matter when players use them to do things, to pay off other players for instance. Players have the capacities (including not only their physical capacities but their social skills, knowledge, network ties, and so on) that they do because of social and political structures. Arenas' rules also reflect how they were established, through strategic interactions which had relative winners and losers. Some players were excluded from the founding engagements, while others were included but lacked much influence on the arenas created.

This cultural-strategic – and interactive – framework separates the moving parts in our theories instead of conflating or combining them. It gives equal weight to players and to arenas, and acknowledges a number of different kinds of players. Although we may focus on one player, the approach discourages us from reducing the other players to the status of structures or a static environment. Another advantage is that it reflects the everyday language that players themselves often use.

A corresponding drawback is that the term "player" seems to attribute too much unity to groups of protestors and to states. Players are constantly shifting, dissolving, and recombining. Considerable research has observed looser connections, such as networks and communities, that enable mobilization and which tie protestors together. Because players are never in full agreement, we need to be able to analyze them also as arenas in which decisions are made: to look at their internal operations. The temporary unity attributed to players at a given time or place is an analytical device to cope with such multiplicity in rapidly evolving political situations. (Arenas

also change constantly, and provide considerable flexibility within their apparent rules.)

The overall trend in these theoretical shifts has been away from vague macro-level structures that are posited by the observer but are otherwise invisible, toward concrete micro-level phenomena that are commonsensical and visible to anyone (Jasper 2010, 2012). You can see an arena, but not a political opportunity structure. You can sit down and read a law, but not a value. In many ways this change is in line with what is known as assembly theory or actor-network theory (Latour 2005): social action consists in bringing together individuals, objects, places, symbols and ideas, and more, in a way that accomplishes something. References to "the social," whether it is Durkheim's social facts, institutions, values, fields, or other imagined causal influences, are discouraged in this model. Only causes that can be observed concretely in a setting are valid ingredients in our descriptions, and once we have thick, fine-grained descriptions, we have already pretty much explained the actions. When we concatenate chains of these interactions together, we may be able to account for macro-level outcomes (Collins 2004).

Representing Social Movements in the Middle East

This trend toward micro-level details has helped scholars to recognize, criticize, and avoid various forms of essentialism, be it Middle Eastern, Arab, or Islamic. In the 1990s, regional specialists tackled the issue of the so-called "exceptionalism" of the region and of Islamist movements in particular. Decisively in the last two decades, scholarship on social movements and mobilization in the region has rejected most of the assumptions of exceptionalism about regional players and movements.[3] Accepting the main tenets of mainstream social movement theory, regional specialists deployed conventional approaches to explain social and political mobilization in the Middle East, showing that Islamist movements are not inherently different from American and Western European movements. Structural approaches at the time usefully combated orientalism.

Regarding the most studied movement in the region, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Munson (2001) used traditional notions of political opportunity structure to explain its early trajectory. Wickham (2002) emphasized the political opportunity lens to explain the resilience of the organization,

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3   An early account "normalizing" the behaviors of Iranians during the Islamic revolution is Kurzman's (1996) article on the 1979 Islamic revolution.

and resource mobilization theories to account for the evolving structure of the movement. In a more interactionist perspective, Clark (2004) also used these frameworks to examine the structural and strategic dynamics of the middle-class activists joining MB charities in Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen. Clark tested the boundaries of the structural perspectives on social mobilization by detailing the strategies of the different players involved, but her analysis ultimately remained focused on these models.

Wiktorowicz (2004) helpfully brought together authors using these prevailing theoretical perspectives to map the dynamics of Islamist movements across the Middle East. In addition to more conventional forms of mobilization, armed Islamist groups were also explained through resource mobilization, political opportunity structures, and ideological framing. In addition, contributors to the book's sections on cultural framing and on networking provided insights into the mechanisms of strategic (re)formulation of ideological and political orientations among and between Islamist movements. They corrected the latent tendency of identity-focused accounts of social mobilization, particularly in the case of Islamists, to overstate the structuring power of culture and ideology. Yet, in the comparative politics and security literature, there remained a pronounced tendency to rely on the salient identity traits of the Islamists to account for their strategic orientations and behaviors in the face of stable authoritarian regimes.

Beinin and Vairel (2011) complained just before the Arab uprisings that regional specialists and studies did not contribute to general theoretical debates on contemporary social movements. They noted, on the one hand, a "disinterest of the dominant currents in comparative politics or sociology in collective action and social movements in the Middle East and North Africa" (2011, 22) and, on the other hand, how little empirical research on social movements in the region contributed to challenging or revising the main approaches in social movement theory. A better dialogue between Middle East studies and social movement theory seemed to be needed, and the Arab uprisings provided just that opportunity.

The continuing inability of social movements (including violent movements) to change governance in the Middle East remained a puzzle to be solved through regional analyses of social mobilization inspired by the perspectives on social movements developed in a "Western" context. In the 2000s, once the issue of (non)"exceptional" mobilization had been resolved, the problem of political stasis became a central challenge. The longer the "exceptional" authoritarian resilience of Middle East regimes lasted, the more social movements were deemed to be structured by authoritarian bargains producing spaces and modes of contestation that

could not directly challenge the state.[4] At best, the slow transformation of Turkey's social and political scene could be portrayed as a situation where traditional social movement activism appeared to have influenced governance (Tuğal 2009). Alternatively, normalization could be linked to the growing assertiveness of some of the better organized women's organizations making inroads into policy making (Moghadam 2001; Moghadam and Gheytanchi 2010) – even though the interactions between Islamist and feminist movements made it difficult to account for these developments in a linear narrative (Salime 2011). More often, before the 2011 uprisings, regime resilience allowed so-called Islamic exceptionalism to reappear in a new form.

The apparent tension between explaining the "normality" of social mobilization in the Middle East and the "abnormality" of its political outcomes led Asef Bayat to propose an alternative approach to activism in an authoritarian regional context where formal activities are continuously repressed by "hard" states. Throughout the 2000s Bayat progressively downplayed the specific relevance of Islamist activism, which he labeled post-Islamism to stress its ideological and political pragmatism, and increasingly emphasized instead the impact of more informal social networks (Bayat 2005, 2007). In *Life as Politics*, he coined the term "nonmovements" to refer to the "collective actions of noncollective actors" (Bayat 2010, 20). Because authoritarianism discouraged explicitly political movements in the region, Bayat argued, nonmovements "embodied shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices were rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations" (2010, 15). In this perspective, contemporary Middle East politics created an exceptional social movement dynamic.

But positing the existence of a nonmovement without explicit structure or even collective identity requires considerable interpretative liberty. Regional specialists had investigated these grassroots networks before without bundling them together as a type of social movement (or nonmovement) (Singerman 1995). In addition, considering the strategic interactions between different players from the urban lower classes, Ismail (2006) noted that, individually and collectively, they could join forces to oppose state policies, but they could also side with the authorities in order to gain some

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4   Scholarship on social movements in the Middle East before the Arab uprisings is similar to most comparative politics and sociology on the region at the time, which approached their subject matter in a context of political stasis. See, for example, Posusney and Angrist (2005).

advantage over their neighbors. If we look hard enough we can usually see players pursuing advantages in different arenas.

From Environments to Players

The environment for protestors includes not only structured arenas but also the other players at work in them. In more structural traditions players are less important than the arenas, and are typically seen as derived from those arenas: when a new arena arises, players with an interest at stake will almost automatically appear in order to take advantage of the arena. The basic insight is sound, but the automatic quality of the process cannot be taken for granted except perhaps under rational-choice assumptions of pure rationality based on objective interests. In the real world, it takes work to coordinate, identify, and mobilize a new player, or to redirect existing players to new arenas. As we saw, political opportunity structures have moved – partly – in the direction of incorporating players.

John Krinsky and Ann Mische (2013) have traced Charles Tilly's efforts to grapple with the question of players, and shown why he mostly avoided it. They quote from the manual he wrote in 1966 for coding disturbances in France: "Sets of participants belong to distinct formation to the extent they act collectively, communicate internally, oppose other sets of participants and/or are given specific identities meaningful outside the disturbance itself" (2013, 4). This could be a definition of players. But in his published work he was more deterred by what Krinsky and Mische call the paradox of actors, namely that they are constantly changing through interaction with others. Tilly followed actions rather than actors, defining the latter through their engagement with other actors, in a view heavily influenced by Marxism and in reaction against the institutionalism of Talcott Parsons. Identities shape action, but action can also shape identities.

In one version of the structural paradigm, waves of protest movements were seen as forming cycles, in which one phase helps to bring on the next phase, driven by shifts in political opportunities (Tarrow 1998). When windows of opportunity open, such as a decrease in repression, new movements quickly appear with their own demands. Early riser movements are joined by others, which eventually overwhelm the political system and close down opportunities. Again, only if interests are assumed to be simple, such as inclusion in the polity or material benefits, and these are assumed to be universal, can we assume that players are already there,

"classes in themselves" that easily turn into "classes for themselves" when opportunities appear.

If the political wing of process theory ignored the process of player formation, the economic (resource mobilization) wing had a place for it in the form of moral entrepreneurs who recognize where public opinion would favor new issues and might provide sufficient resources to launch social movement organizations. Because McCarthy and Zald (1977) saw social movement sectors and industries as parallel to markets, they expected competition among players. The formal organizations that were the main unit of analysis in their theory are relatively persistent and well-defined players. Regional specialists looking at cycles of social unrest in the Muslim world easily saw such moral entrepreneurs in Islamist leaders, but also in other influential religious, ethnic, or tribal players.

A great deal of the cultural turn in social-movement studies has aimed to show how players form. Foremost is the extensive research on collective identity, which shows that organizers and ideologists must work hard to label and delineate most movements before they can enter any arenas. There are different bases of identity. Although the paradigmatic image is an identity based on demographic categories of race, class, gender, or sexual orientation, identities can also form around favored tactics, organizational membership, the goals of a movement – or ideology and religion (Jasper 1997). Collective identities yield a range of benefits but also risks to groups as well as to individuals: any given identity fits some participants more comfortably than others (McGarry and Jasper 2015). Melucci (1996) saw identity processes and struggles as the core of social movements.

The role of changing identities in the recent wave of social mobilization in the Middle East remains understudied.[5] Often, the Arab uprisings have been viewed primarily as the outcome of a long structural undermining of authoritarianism, leading to a situation in 2011 when protestors seized what was then an objective opportunity – even if regional experts did not see it coming – that corresponded to overdue rearticulations of power (Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015). Such explanations see the identity of these players as predefined in relation to the existing authoritarian order, and they sideline the role of the protest events in shaping new political views, practices, and identities. Yet detailed analyses, such as Allal and Pierret's (2013) collection, as well as those found in this book, highlight the relevance

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5   More broadly, scholars have increasingly challenged the social and economic categories commonly used to box in social players in explanations of a long structural undermining of authoritarianism (Tripp 2013; Amar 2013).

of the transformations of identities and their attendant practices for the emergence of revolutionary players in 2011. For example, in Syria, informal social networks were important, but new structures and behaviors emerged alongside these preexisting entities, as previously distinct networks merged into one another when the unrest and then conflict gained momentum (Leenders 2012; Leenders and Heydemann 2012).

Identities can and usually do change through strategic interactions. Repeatedly in the region, the common diagnostic and prognostic framing derived from Islamism required substantial reframing. Motivational framing through Islamist lenses lost some of its relevance during the uprisings and the early post-uprisings period, when transnational, armed Islamist networks were unable to impose themselves as leading political players. This observation dovetails with accounts of armed Islamist mobilization produced before the uprisings that indicated how theories repeatedly prioritized the role of ideological framing at the expense of the role played by situational positioning and interactive processes of frame articulation (Snow and Byrd 2007). Other forms of Islamist motivational framing advocating electoral participation gained prominence, particularly in those situations of open multiparty competition, as in Tunisia. While cultural and political identities shaped protest in situations of rapid deinstitutionalization, these strategic rearticulations were themselves shaped by the trajectories of the protests. The 2011 uprisings did not take hold in Algeria because a sharp divide persisted between secularist and Islamist opponents of the regime, which was not in this case superseded by new protest identities (Volpi 2013).

Other cultural work has built on this basic idea of identities, showing how individuals are recruited via the right frames, how identities are sustained or redirected through new narratives, how friends and foes are built out of the raw materials of villains and victims and heroes. Even groups that claim to oppose collective identities deploy labels such as the 1% or the 99%. But identity work never ends, leaving identities forever open to contention. The very category of "Islamist movement" was reshaped after the uprisings as individuals and groups redefined what an Islamic identity meant in these new circumstances (Lacroix and Shalata 2016). The "Islamic identity" card could thus be played as much by pro-regime players as by different types of Islamist organizations to entice, frighten, or neutralize the competition.

If we can incorporate multifaceted accounts of players in our theories, we can better explain decision-making – and vice versa. Players are never entirely unified, homogenous actors. Even when they appear that way from the outside, when you look inside them they are arenas as well: places

with various procedures for disagreeing and for generating decisions. Every player can be analyzed into its subplayers – all the way down to individuals. An interactionist perspective can help us understand how meetings produce decisions, for which we need to know things such as who is at the meeting, who speaks, who is listened to, how leaders operate, and what affective loyalties are present (Haug 2013).

If the concept of arenas helps pull together some of the best structural insights, the concept of players draws on many cultural and interpretive insights. Arenas and players are constantly changing, often as the result of strategic efforts, but they offer enough stability at any time for us to use them in our explanations. ("Structures," after all, are simply components that we choose to accept as fixed for the purpose of our current explanation.) And their very transformations are something to be explained. But in the end, we need to put the players in motion, engaged with each other in various arenas.

Strategic Interaction

The shift from stable, inert structures to active players in changing arenas reflects a desire to build more dynamic models that reflect agency, choices, dilemmas, and contingency. Dozens of scholars have tried to push beyond static models, with varying degrees of success.

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) acknowledged the need for more dynamics in the political-opportunity approach by calling for "mechanisms": small causal links that, when triggered, flip the situation from one state to another with predictable regularity. Chains of these mechanisms could be put together to explain broader processes or macro-level results such as revolutions. Unfortunately their use of mechanisms was widely criticized (e.g., Koopmans, 2003; Oliver, 2003; Taylor, 2003). Too many types of causes, ranging from the psychological to the macrolevel, were included, partly because the authors rejected the standard usage of a mechanism as dropping down to the psychological or social psychological level in order to explain institutional outcomes (Elster 1999; Hedström 2005, 8-9), preferring instead Merton's treatment of mechanisms as middle range theory. In McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), mechanisms remain mechanistic, lacking the contingency or nuance that most analysts seek.

Applying McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly to the Middle East, Beinin and Vairel (2011) gave priority to structural dimensions of arenas over players' perspectives. They conceptualized contexts comparatively as structured political cultures that shape interactions among players – be they workers' unions, bar

associations, human rights networks, and so on. Regarding networks, and particularly informal networks and processes of micromobilization, they deemphasized the role of hierarchical structure and cost-benefit analysis for individuals. Contentious practices rested on the logics of action and the logics of situation during exchanges between regime and opposition that led to the construction and utilization of particular repertoires of contention. But despite Beinin and Vairel's best efforts to deal with the limitations of the *Dynamics of Contention* framework, this theoretical framing imposed a structuralist slant on their examinations of regional contexts, networks, and practices. Beinin and Vairel embraced Kurzman's (2004a) suggestion to take protesters' beliefs seriously, but they limited themselves to articulated beliefs. Yet, not only voiced beliefs but also emotional states associated for example with anger, fear, revenge, or confusion can directly shape action.

The Arab uprisings generated arenas of contention in which, instead of prestructured players interacting with state players under a known set of rules and expectations, unstable situations encouraged both anti- and proregime players to redefine their tactics, strategies, and identities. In this light, Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule (2012) suggested a reconsideration of the relationship between structural and interactionist factors in explanations of social processes in the region. This changing regional context favored those perspectives giving a more salient role to framing and prioritizing players' (micro) views over structural (macro) conditions (Kurzman 2008, 2012).

Strategic tradeoffs, dilemmas, and decisions force players into choice points in some cases, or encourage them to actively ignore options at other points, as game theory observes. But few political engagements can be summed up accurately in neat games with clear endpoints, from which decision-makers can calculate backwards. Instead, politics is an endless series of actions and reactions, so subtle and complex that players only anticipate one or two moves ahead. Prediction is almost impossible, unintended outcomes are always present. A number of scholars have called for an interactionist and strategic alternative (Oliver 2003; Maney et al. 2012).

Duyvendak and Fillieule (2015) refer to the players and arenas framework as the "strategic interaction paradigm," in order to highlight its moving parts: individuals, compound players, rules and expectations, physical arenas, other settings, the actions that lead to other actions, and so on down long chains. It is a "dispositionist interactionism," they say, since it recognizes the cultural baggage that players carry with them. They do not begin each interaction from scratch, subject only to the definition of the situation that emerges or which is imposed by the various players. Individuals are key players, partly independent of the organizations to

which they belong and capable of long and complex careers outside those organizations (Fillieule 2010). This argument dovetails with Dobry's (2009) theory of fluid conjunctures, which examines the repositioning of actors and practices within preexisting structures during crises. Personal and institutional histories do matter, but crisis situations are precisely moments when such baggage can be reoriented toward different objectives – past experiences and practices are not so much negated or forgotten, as they are put to new uses.

The interactionist perspective answers what we might call the "Kurzman challenge." In a book on Iran, Kurzman (2004b) assessed the dominant theories of revolution – political, organizational, cultural, economic, and military – and found them all wanting, even in combination. They all posited initial conditions from which analysts – retrospectively – believed that the 1979 revolution followed. Instead, the revolutionary movement created its own conditions for success out of a mass of confusion, in particular building a sense of itself as a viable political player that could and would win. By digging into participants' own points of view, Kurzman could see how this viability was created, and how the movement created the organizational, political, and other factors that it needed for success. He even mentions that emotions and strategic choices were part of this story (Kurzman 2004b, 169). Revolutions and other political outcomes must be traced through micro-level, cultural, and strategic interactions, because initial conditions are never enough.[6]

Culture and Emotions

We have suggested several ways that the new interactive approach must take seriously the points of view of players, reinforcing the role of culture and psychology. Players act through their cultural lenses and expectations and a variety of emotions. We saw the crucial role of collective identities in forming players and guiding their actions. Innumerable social-movement scholars have also examined frames and framing processes, stories and narratives, and a wealth of other carriers of meaning (for a summary see Jasper 2007). Social psychologists have reasserted the importance of motivational processes, long banished by the structural school (Klandermans 1997; Pinard 2011; Jasper 2017). Culture has been rethought as knowledge and tools

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6   For a similar anti-structural argument see Jasper (1990), who argues that nuclear agencies and industries in France managed to create the very conditions that were then used to justify the country's nuclear commitment.

that change in response to circumstances (and help players react), rather than a fixed set of traditions – as a much-criticized orientalist tradition once viewed culture in the Middle East (Lockman 2004; Volpi 2010). Decisions are very much part of culture, as are emotions.

An older view of emotions dismissed them as irrational upwellings from deep inside individuals that tend to derail coordinated or sustained actions. Recent research demonstrates that most of the time, instead, emotions help us continue paths of action and cherished projects. They shape our goals as well as the actions taken to obtain them. They attach us to allies and tie us into social networks (although those networks may discourage political activity as well as enable it). In the form of moods they give us the energy to participate (or take that energy away). Emotions connect us to our physical and social worlds as well as to our own bodies. Our emotions send signals to ourselves and to others about how well we are doing in relation to our projects and values. Emotions are a good example of open-ended, micro-level mechanisms (Elster 1999; Jasper 2018).

As traditional repertoires of contention break down in arenas characterized by unusual interactions between players, emotions can become in specific locations and at specific times an important element in the reconstruction of new repertoires of action. This does not mean that protestors in those arenas are abnormal players, rather that emotionally grounded action corresponds to a possible logic of action (Pearlman 2013). During the Arab uprisings, interactions between regimes and demonstrators repeatedly facilitated the emergence of arenas of contestation in which these responses seemed appropriate. From the riots that followed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia to the armed clashes in Libya's Benghazi, ad hoc violence by pro- and anti-regime players surprised by the turn of events escalated the confrontation and created new repertoires of contention (Volpi 2017).

Jon Elster (1999) uses emotions as mechanisms to get at choices and uncertainty. Emotional pathways may have several possible directions: a small number, but not an infinite number. Traced carefully, we can understand the emotional steps taken to action, to interaction, and eventually to broader outcomes. By watching individuals interact with each other, and by understanding the psychological makeup they carry with them to those encounters, we can understand the interactions better without lapsing into overly determinate models.

The study of gender has been closely tied to that of culture, in that masculinities and femininities are deeply cultural and emotional, as well as obviously embodied. Extensive work on the gender dynamics of Western movements has been adapted to the Arab awakening. Women activists often

play different roles in movements than men, for instance keeping social networks and communities intact or bridging between networks (Al-Ali 2012; Salime 2011). Women's bodies often become a target for repression and violence (Johansson-Nogués 2013; Hafez 2014). The status of women can also be taken as an indicator of Westernization and liberalization – whether that is framed as a good or a bad thing (Sjoberg and Whooley 2015). Glib theories of frustrated masculinity, according to Paul Amar (2011), have been used to simplify and dismiss much of the protest, in an orientalist echo of crowd theories that leapt too easily from deep psychological motivations to collective action. In practice, women's networks, as complex players, have developed complex interactions over time with pro- and anti-regime actors; and the Arab uprisings provided new opportunities and constraints for these players to strategically engage with new social and political processes in order to achieved multilayered objectives (Khalil 2015).

Players and arenas, identities and tactics, decisions and emotions, all set in a cultural perspective that acknowledges how we attribute meaning to the world around us and act by means of those meanings: this is a new explanatory sensibility that has emerged in Europe and the United States in the last decade or two (Jasper 2010, 2012). It thrives on micro-level details, but it can also deal with macro-level players, arenas, and outcomes. Like any new perspective, it allows us to rethink the concepts of the older structural paradigm without losing its insights.

The Cultural-Strategic Rethinking of Structure

The cultural-strategic vision does not reject the insights of older theories, but incorporates them by reimagining the entities and processes about which they taught us so much (Jasper 2007, 89-95). We can begin with crowds, which were once dismissed as automatic mechanisms for demagogues to impose their will on participants, but which we can now see as extended interactions that express cultural understandings but also allow the creation or reinforcement of emotions such as indignation. Gatherings and other events such as protests have their own open-ended, interactive logics that represent an alternative to the overly organizational models of the structural paradigm (Oliver 1989; Collins 2004).

Networks once seemed the paradigm of the "mobilizing structures" that allow movements to form (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). But networks include emotions and cultural meanings, which they help to transmit; in many cases these are more important than a movement's ideology in drawing

recruits (Munson 2009). Plus a new appreciation of agency suggests that new networks can be created when necessary. Bloc recruitment and biographical availability, other factors that were given a structural interpretation, also depend on considerable cultural work: having young children is a constraint on some potential recruits, but others bring their kids as part of their performance. Bloc recruitment depends on persuading the leaders of those blocs, such as religious leaders with loyal congregations (which represent almost the only examples of bloc recruitment). Even those Islamist networks that had previously been seen as the main orchestrators of contentious politics in the Arab world showed their limitations during the Arab uprisings, as anti-regime mobilization repeatedly bypassed them (Clarke 2014).

In the structural vision, resources were taken as hard and fast; even their distribution was largely assumed to be given. But of course a large part of strategy is to mobilize resources, especially to grab resources from the other side whenever possible. Although describing soccer hooligans fighting the police, Buford (1991, 291) shows how easily many resources can be rethought and repurposed.

> One inspired little scientist discovered that, with such a strong Mediterranean breeze coming off the port, he had only to step to one side of the brown cloud issuing from the canister on the pavement, grab it from behind – as if picking up a lobster – and throw it back at the very people who had fired it at him. It was like a revelation inverted: in an instant, the canister lost its mystery and power. It also lost all significance, except one: it became a new thing to throw at the police.

During the 2011 Libyan uprisings most dramatically, as crowds overwhelmed local security forces in many locations in the east of the country, protestors found themselves in possession of the military arsenals left behind. The weapons that the Kaddafi regime had stockpiled throughout the country became an important resource for the protestors as unrest turned into more systematic armed confrontation between the regime and its opponents.

Repression often seems like a structural factor, based on available resources. In the case of Egypt, how could billions of dollars in US military aid not constrain the protestors of 2011? This seems like an obvious background condition, continued for decades both before the Arab uprisings and after el-Sisi's coup. Yet there are several problems with this apparently structural constraint. First, any army's possession of extensive weaponry still requires a decision to put it to use before there is direct coercion (although there may be some threat of coercion, but even in that case the army must decide to

parade its tanks and troops through the streets). Decisions to use or not to use resources are strategic, not structural.

Repressive actions by state security forces are also, like protest actions, susceptible to the situational logic of particular episodes of contention (with all their emotional responses and contingencies within the chain of command). It may well be that some security apparatuses are generally more structured and functional than others, but that does not guarantee that they will effectively repress an uprising of a kind they have never faced before (Goodwin 2011). Most retrospective explanations of why the Tunisian and Egyptian military behaved as they did involve rationalization of the behavior of the different players in order to make the outcome appear the most rational course of action for all those involved.

In addition, sophisticated military hardware is not especially relevant to the repression of protest. Egypt may have the largest, best equipped military in the Arab world, but it does not need all that equipment to put down protestors. An air force of F-16 fighter jets is unlikely to be used against Egyptian civilians. Out of desperation both Kaddafi and Assad indeed used fighter jets against their own populations, but these – at least at first – proved blunt instruments that discredited the regime as much as they cowed protestors. Almost all states are capable of killing peaceful protestors if they wish; they do not need advanced weapons from the US, Russia, or other international munitions producers. Only when those protestors develop into armed insurgents and protest events into a civil conflict, processes that take time, does the balance of arms begin to matter.

Structures don't do much by themselves; they always depend on cultural understandings and strategic decisions. These understandings and strategies can be emotionally induced and coincidental, especially in situations of severe deinstitutionalization, when a lack of reflexivity does not make them any less consequential. Even the most structured arenas can be changed and interpreted. Resources can be captured or repurposed. Only through dynamic, interactive, and micro-level models can we fully grasp how this happens.

Back to the Macro Level

The challenge for a cultural-strategic approach, or any approach grounded in micro-level interactions, is how to "scale up" to broad outcomes such as national movements, regime changes, and policy impacts. Ideally we would trace long chains of interactions. For protestors, these might begin

with conversations around kitchen tables, move to exchanges between neighbors, proceed out into the streets, and then on to central sites like Tahrir Square. We would love to trace similar sequences for the police and militaries: from a private conversation among commanders to their instructions to the troops, and on out to the engagements on the streets. And with politicians: from private interactions to public debates, and finally to parliamentary or executive decisions. We would follow compound players back and forth as they turn into arenas making choices, then as they try to implement those choices in their engagements with other players.

So much for the ideal. Methodologically, there are a lot of interactions to which we will never have access; all strategic players have some moments they wish to keep secret. State players have great advantages in doing so. This is why it is so easy to reduce them to black-box structures, a bit mysterious from the outside. But we should not make a methodological limitation into a theoretical assumption.

Social science offers two shortcut methods for linking the micro to the macro. The more common is to aggregate the microactions. Market prices result from many, many individual transactions, providing a model for economists to understand all sorts of social outcomes and to describe paradoxes in which those outcomes are not the intent of any of the players. Voting is also a form of aggregation, although in this case with rules and resources that generate a macro-level outcome. Most often, social scientists must sample some population to get the raw materials they need to aggregate; this is the point of surveys for instance. Such techniques usually assume that the individuals are interchangeable, or that their idiosyncrasies average out in the aggregate. They are not so good at grasping the influence of salient symbolic and decisive individuals or events.

The second solution is to insert microdynamics into structural models through scope. When George W. Bush decided to go to war against Saddam Hussein, a great deal then happened in both their countries (and others) due to their organizational positions, which allowed both men to direct resources and personnel to pursue their projects. Although there needs to be a structural component in our strategic story, the story begins with a tiny group of individuals talking with one another in a small number of meetings: Bush, Cheney, and a handful of advisors (a shockingly small number, for such a momentous decision).[7]

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7   An astute reviewer for the press pointed out the long history of US involvement in the region as a key structural factor. But Bush had to decide how (and perhaps whether) to continue that tradition. Another president – Clinton or Obama – might have made a very different decision.

The implementation of their decisions also occurred through a chain of personal interactions in several government agencies, in several armed forces, and within those forces, at the level of each corps, division, brigade, company, and platoon. Sometimes it is useful for an analyst to assume that organizational structures will respond the way they are supposed to, but in some cases it is not. Regime change during the Arab uprisings was precisely the result of these "dysfunctions" within various chains of command (military, political, and so on). A full explanation would cover how compliance is achieved or not achieved, by following the chains of microinteractions (which for methodological reasons we may need to sample selectively).

The Chapters to Follow

In the first chapter, John Chalcraft addresses the question the volume poses about the configuration of new, "revolutionary" actors: their origins, emergence, identities, goals, practices, interactions, relative stability, and structure. The chapter makes a pitch for the relevance of a form of appropriation called "piracy": the unruly, translocal, and often cross-border appropriation of "unpatented" contentious ideas in triggering, shaping, and fortifying the mobilizing projects of early riser activists. The chapter considers some central forms of appropriation across borders in the Arab uprisings of 2011, including frames, such as bread, dignity, and freedom; identities, such as that of the rights-bearing people; goals, such as overthrowing the regime; networked styles of organizing; and strategies and tactics, such as continuous occupations and pitched battles with police. It argues that piracy offers new lines of collective action for those undergoing hegemonic disincorporation, bringing – amid uncertainty and risk – a guide to mobilization, a basis of cohesion amid new connections, and an asymmetric strategy for new and previously fragmented and weak collective actors. Piracy of this kind has a long history in the Middle East and North Africa. Chalcraft challenges more structural studies of diffusion, faulting them for their overly mechanistic focus on media of transmission, and their use of metaphors rooted in economic forms of causation. The piracy metaphor draws attention to political explanatory logics and mechanisms, and brings into clearer view the importance of unruly appropriation (including search, seizure, and translation), and the role played by the situated political struggles of adopters. In so doing, it can help explain the velocity, selectivity, many-headed-ness, and utility of the translocal life of contentious ideas, and shed new light on the rapid constitution of new and transgressive collective actors.

In Chapter 2, Jillian Schwedler examines the anti-Israeli protests at the Kaluti mosque before and after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, in order to bring to light dimensions of the protests that are often overlooked in situations of regime stability. In one reading, the low turnout for the Million Man March might be read as evidence for the failure of a mass uprising to emerge in Jordan. But in another reading, that event was part of a set of protests that, although small, did considerable political work other than to just pressure the regime to change a policy. This chapter examines the latter reading. In the first section, the chapter briefly examines how scholars study protests in general and the Arab uprisings in particular. It illustrates how attention to micropractices can reveal political work done through protests that is often overlooked by analytic frameworks that prioritize generic questions pertaining to social movements or uprisings. The chapter then turns to the specific dynamics of the Kaluti protests that took place prior to the 2011 uprising, paying close attention to the interactions between various participants and security agencies over the course of the protests. Having attended 21 such protests, Schwedler is able to identify routines as well as innovations, and to share insights from participants about what they understand to be happening. Finally, the chapter examines the post-uprising Kaluti protests, noting few innovations or deviations from the familiar script until July 2014, more than three years after the uprisings began. By focusing on the microdynamics of a limited set of protests, the chapter reveals the ways in which protests can do a wide range of political work, beyond that of building a movement, making a claim against a regime (or some other power), or, on the part of the state, displaying a willingness to either permit or repress dissent.

In Chapter 3, Frédéric Volpi shows how political revolutions can generate revolutionary actors. In Tunisia, a highly visible aspect of grassroots activism after the 2011 Arab uprising was Salafi religious, social, and political mobilization. Ansar al-Sharia (AST), a movement with no previous history as a mass-based organization, became a serious challenger for both state institutions and established social movements. The chapter traces how new individual and collective identities crystallized into a religious and political activism, which broke down after a couple of years when the new Tunisian regime declared AST a terrorist organization. It investigates Ansar al-Sharia first as a player competing against other social and political players to shape arenas of contention and governance in post-uprising Tunisia, and second as an arena of contention over the meaning and practice of Tunisian Salafism. Between 2011 and 2013, AST embodied a tentative consolidation of new identities and contentious practices during an episode

of deinstitutionalization and reinstitutionalization of the Tunisian state. This process and its outcomes were not "predefined" by already existing Salafi discourses and practices, and their (in)compatibility with democratic institutions. Instead, the interactions between the grassroots sympathizers inspired by a "revolutionary" praxis and more established Salafi leaders made it difficult for the cadres of the movement to impose a political discipline. In turn, this set of interactions increased over time the level of the strategic confrontations between AST and other players of the Tunisian democratic transition. Finally, the strategic confrontation between pro-state players seeking to entrench the formal arena of a liberal-democratic political order and AST players challenging these state-imposed boundaries eventually led to the collapse of AST as a unitary player.

In Chapter 4, Wendy Pearlman illustrates that while structural factors were critical in shaping the motivations and opportunities that drove Syrians to revolt, we must also examine localized decisions and actions to understand when, where, and how the uprising began. Original interviews with participants in the first mass street demonstration in Daraa, Syria offers a complement to structural models, making three contributions to understanding revolts. First, scrutiny of decisions in context reveals how easily they can be derailed, calling attention to the consequential contingency infusing events. Second, scrutiny of sequences of actions reveals both premeditation and spontaneity, the relative roles of which are puzzling under repressive regimes that make prior planning for protest both more difficult and more necessary. Third, examination of participants' understandings of their own choices uncovers the microfoundations of macropolitical phenomena, illustrating the varied ways that instrumental rationality, values, and emotions guide behavior.

In Chapter 5, Youssef El Chazli shows that, while revolutions might well be national events, they still emerge from locally constructed configurations. Understanding what happened in Egypt in early 2011 requires us to look at local strategic interactions between different actors (protestors, political parties, security apparatuses, and "ordinary people"), and not only in the capital city Cairo. The case of Egypt's "second capital," Alexandria, is of great interest in this respect. During the year 2010, it witnessed a protest dynamic that was quite different from Cairo's, and was recognized afterwards as one of the main "revolutionary cities." By delving into the bundles of interactions between the different actors in the lead up to January 2011, we can see how a decentered approach focusing on local interactions in the "periphery" provides an alternative story about political crises and revolutions; about their contingency and

indeterminacy; and how tactics, strategies, and actions result from these various interactions.

In the final chapter, Farhad Khosrokhavar investigates how Arab revolutions promoted nonviolence (*selmiyah*) and the dignity of the citizen (*karama*) at their outset. These mottoes were formulated in gestures that involved body language, slogans, collective "emotionalism," and attempts at building new concrete communities, especially at Tahrir Square. These mottoes could not resist the violence of the Deep State, the intolerance of the revolutionary actors, and geopolitics (with the exception of Tunisia). The chapter analyzes violence during the transitional period, from the ousting of President Mubarak in 2011 to the el-Sisi takeover in 2013, stressing the significance of affects, in situ actions and reactions, and the effervescent atmosphere of the demonstrations and sit ins. During this period, violence resulted as much from the moods from below as the widening gap between the larger society and the newly empowered Muslim Brotherhood.

Charles Kurzman concludes the book by contrasting the cold, simplified explanations that social science offers for shocking moments like the Arab uprisings with the lived experience of those making them. We do not always know how to put all the small pieces together, but we cannot ignore them. People have emotions, make decisions, and try to make sense of the world around them. In the process, they create that world.

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1   The Social Life of Contentious Ideas

Piracy and Unruly, Translocal Appropriation in the Arab
Uprisings and Beyond

John Chalcraft

Abstract
This chapter argues for the relevance of piracy – the unruly, translocal
and cross-border appropriation of "unpatented" models for contentious
mobilization – in triggering, shaping and fortifying the mobilizing pro-
jects of early-riser activists. The chapter considers some central forms of
piracy, undertaken by dissenting constituencies undergoing hegemonic
disincorporation, in the Arab uprisings of 2011. Piracy brings amid un-
certainty and risk a guide to mobilization, a basis of cohesion amid new
connections, and an asymmetric strategy for previously fragmented and/
or weak actors. The chapter challenges standard studies of diffusion,
faulting them for hydraulic and/or economistic approaches. Piracy can
help explain the velocity, selectivity, many-headed-ness, and force of the
translocal life of contentious ideas, shedding light on the rapid constitu-
tion of transgressive collective actors.

Keywords: piracy, appropriation, transgressive mobilization, Arab upris-
ings, diffusion

> "What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but Loose-Fish?"
> – Herman Melville, Moby-Dick

The Egyptian economist and public intellectual Galal Amin came unusually
close to predicting the Arab uprisings of 2011. Nonetheless, in his first substan-
tial publication after Mubarak's fall, even he placed considerable emphasis

on the fact that Egypt had "surprised itself" in the upsurge (Amin 2011). What was at stake in 2011 was not the incremental development of a tried and tested protest repertoire, but a more radical discontinuity. How can we explain and understand the rapid and relatively sudden appearance of new collective actions by subordinated groups? In the case of the Arab uprisings of 2011, how can we account for the temporary coming together of a forceful collective agent identifiable as a rights-bearing sovereign people seeking to bring down the regime, an agent-in-becoming that was associated and partially defined by various ideas, goals, and practices that were in some significant degree innovative: the secular slogans of bread, dignity and freedom, the goal of regime overthrow, decentralized modes of organizing, unarmed but forceful, institutionally disruptive action, swarming tactics to generate crowds, pitched battles against police, and the continuous occupations of vital public space (Chalcraft 2012; Gunning and Zvi Baron 2013; Ismail 2012; Tripp 2015).

The social constructionist turn in social movement theory has increasingly taken up questions of agency and innovation (Jasper 2007; Jasper and Duyvendak 2015; Klandermans 1997; Kurzman 2004, 2012; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). One promising line of enquiry looks for answers in the study of "diffusion": the origination, circulation, and appropriation, especially cross-nationally, of ideas, models and practices relevant to collective action (Beissinger 2007; Chabot 2000; Chabot and Duyvendak 2002; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Snow and Benford 1999; Strang and Soule 1998). Paying particular attention to the case of Egypt, this chapter pursues this line of investigation, building on these studies while challenging some of their basic modes of description and explanation.

While the diffusion model has already been criticized for its linearity and Eurocentrism (Chabot 2000), this chapter suggests that the diffusion model in regards to the study of transgressive mobilization is neither appropriate nor unitary, and argues that we can usefully move beyond it altogether, referring to the social life rather than the diffusion of contentious ideas. This usage draws our attention to how social subjects in particular settings come to give value to, and actively appropriate, ideas. The chapter argues, further, that we can better understand this social life by thinking less in terms of media infrastructure, similarity attribution, and brokerage, metaphors and concepts which suffer from economism, sociological determinism, and descriptiveness, and more in terms of piracy. A focus on piracy, understood as involving unruly forms of ideational translocal appropriation, can enrich our understanding of how models for collective action cross national borders, and thus of how new collective actors are assembled in relatively rapid, powerful and partially spontaneous ways.

Piracy

"Piracy" is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the action of committing robbery, kidnap, or violence at sea or from the sea without lawful authority"; it is also defined as "the unauthorized reproduction or use of an invention or work of another." Benedict Anderson (2006) famously argues that nationalism after the late eighteenth century became modular, abstracted as a guide for action, and available for appropriation on the global stage in widely differing political, social and economic contexts. In much of Anderson's work, print capitalism and the colonial state act as sociological "surrogate parents" for the appropriation of ideas and deep horizontal ties involved in nation-ness. Anderson was eventually to suggest that such forms of prior sociological determination were not always necessary. In the afterword to the third edition of his book, Anderson considered the pattern of transnational diffusion and translation of the book itself. He conceived this pattern metaphorically as piracy, in the second sense noted above. There was, he conceded, no patent on his book, and "local initiative, rather than external coercion or slavish imitation" governed the process of translation, initiatives that were taken amid situated and diverse political struggles. One of his examples of such appropriation touched on Middle East studies, as it involved the prominent Palestinian-Israeli politician and commentator, Azmi Bishara, who wrote the introduction to an edition of the book, a publication motivated by opposition to the "slide toward apartheid" in a "Likud-ruled" state (Anderson 2006, 228-229). Anderson was to conclude that amid these unruly appropriations, *Imagined Communities* was "not my book any more" (p. 235). In some sense, the book's own intellectual model had taken on a life of its own.

    The term "piracy" implies that the connections involved in the social life of models for collective action, especially those of intense interest and those forged at moments of high risk and deinstitutionalization, are made by protagonists, they are not just found in transmission infrastructures, or caused by market logics or prior sociological determinations. The first sense of piracy as defined above is also suggested, at least metaphorically. Just as pirates acquire their booty by heading toward established shipping routes, and insist in an unscheduled, risky, and unauthorized way on forging a connection with existing and routinized forms of circulation, and go on to ransack items under circulation for their own purposes, so too are connections made between challengers and existing networks of communications and the ideas circulating therein in unauthorized, variable and discontinuous ways. Appropriators, like pirates, use existing networks of communication, but their actions and purposes are not dictated by them. Their logic is unauthorized

and unruly. Their actions run according to logics not determined by official rules, communication and transport infrastructures, or institutions.

The relevant mechanisms are the inverse of those at work in the "micro-mobilization tasks and processes" delineated by Snow and his coauthors for preestablished social movement organizations in the latter's strategic attempts to align their frames, interests, and goals with previously unmo-bilized constituencies and thus win adherence and participation (Snow et al. 1986, 464). The logics relevant to piracy and unruly translocal appropria-tion are not those stemming from the interests and tasks of preestablished collective actors, but those involved in the *making* of collective actors that do not previously exist or are only latent in the cracks and tensions of existing forms of structure. The idea of piracy can help to capture some aspect of this "creative ontology."[1]

When activists seized the initiative in the Arab uprisings, and when ordinary people came onto the streets, driven by a wide variety of material and ideal interests, people were put into new relationships with one another, for which there were no routines and rules. In a sense, they were suddenly living like pirates. Ordinary hierarchies and social conventions were put to one side, and commonsense notions of space and place were shocked and even broken. The hybrid and motley social associations and recombinations that were now enacted, where Copts and Muslims, for example, demon-strated side by side, are redolent in some respects of the "multinational, multicultural, and multiracial" formations familiar to historians of pirate ships (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 164). The search for new forms of au-tonomy, "dignity" and "freedom," familiar also in pirate forms of shipboard egalitarianism, established against the hierarchies of navy and commerce, was now on (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 162-173; Rediker 2004, 60-82). Under these conditions, where social action lost its customary guides, new appropriations and guides for action were sought out as routes from injustice, and voraciously appropriated. These models helped now to inspire and guide the action, altering like railway switchmen, in the Weberian analogy, the tracks on which action was pushed by the dynamic of interest.

A Very Active Search

Actors engaged in piracy are understood here as having latent, enduring, socially established reasons to act. They are understood to be possessed

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1   I credit this phrase to my PhD student, Jann Lohmann.

of a strong sense of injustice and to be experiencing powerful, shared feelings of dissent. For a variety of reasons, their relationships to existing structures of power and authority are full of tension. They are not "like rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations" (Churchill, cited in Chomsky 1997, 5). They are expected to feel that transacted politics and established authorities are corrupted and incapable of tackling the injustices they feel. It is likely that they also experience established forms of contained contention as inadequate. As some Bahrainis declared on the eve of 2011, "anger and frustration is [sic] boiling among us all" (Bahrain Online, February 2011, cited in Shehabi and Jones 2015, 3). In Egypt, diverse constituencies held strong grievances in the late 2000s: industrial workers opposed deteriorating wages and the attrition of the corporatist bargain, women faced discrimination and harassment, civil servants organized against public sector cuts, the urban survivalist poor faced rising prices, corruption and official indifference and violence, pan-Arab, pro-Palestinian or local nationalists were disappointed with Mubarak's craven stance on the regional stage, educated youth chafed against political exclusion and human rights abuses, while repressed Islamists fought rigged elections, and football fans wrestled with police (Chalcraft 2014; Al-Aswany 2010). This chapter views the relevant feelings of injustice, even though they may be passionate and even angry, not in terms of male frustration-aggression (Gurr 1968), but in terms of a socially established tension between *is* and *ought* that distances subjects from existing structures of power and engages the normative and political imagination, propelling a search for alternatives. Like pirates, scattered and dissenting constituencies are disincorporated from existing hegemonic structures and alienated from existing forms of contained contention. The tension in view is an unruly latency that acts as an enabling condition for new forms of collective action: a "situational causal mechanism" (Hedström and Swedberg 1998) with an indeterminate outcome (Elster 1998). "Something must be done" is one common sentiment, but what can possibly be done, especially in the face of a lack of adequate mobilizing structures, inspirational frames, plausible opportunities, and existing repertoires.

Paying attention to the motivations engendered in situations of hegemonic disincorporation provides an explanation for why actors engage in a search to make a wide variety of "attributions of similarity," attributions which may be highly contested in a given situation. Diffusion models have studied how model transmission requires as a condition some kind of attribution of similarity between receiver and transmitter. The explanation suggests, with some plausibility, that movement actors imagine that "we

are like them and therefore let us do as they do." Such commonalities might be actual or perceived. They may be rooted in identity, "we are women," "Arabs," "Muslims," and so on, or in occupational and professional positions, or a location in some kind of relatively formalized state-based or institutional hierarchy. This approach, however, can become tautological, insofar as connections require similar conditions or attributions by definition, and therefore such attributions or conditions are not separable from the phenomenon they are supposed to explain. Beyond this, the approach can be worrisomely arbitrary in terms of the preexisting commonalities it posits as explanatory, and remains indeterminate as a causal mechanism, especially in revolutionary or potentially revolutionary situations, as such similarities may or may not come into being, or they may change over time in form or content. We are still permitted to ask what drives and motivates attributions of similarity, especially insofar as certain actors are motivated to do it, and others are not. We note that during the Arab uprisings of 2011, guardians of the status quo insisted that every country was different, that there was no reason to think that Egypt was like Tunisia, or that Syria was like Bahrain, while those determined to seize the moment asserted exactly the contrary. These different parties had different reasons to insist on similarity and dissimilarity. In short, processes of hegemonic disincorporation, engendering an active search for new forms of collective action, rather than either preexisting, static conditions of similarity, or self-propelled or purely agentic attributions of similarity, are an important part of the explanation, focusing attention on basic motivations for translocal ideational appropriation.

Seizure and Appropriation

On January 14, 2011, when Tunisia's long-standing strongman president, Zin Al-Din Ben Ali, fell from power, a new model of collective action became available for pirating. Mass protest by ordinary people had brought down a president-for-life (Owen 2012). This was a model that was not owned or controlled by its own inventors. It was now a "loose," not a "fast-fish" in the striking language of Herman Melville's classic novel, *Moby-Dick*. A fast-fish referred to a whale connected by a harpoon-line to a ship that by sea-faring custom now had ownership rights over the whale. A loose-fish was a fugitive whale that had been pursued but was not attached by a line to any given ship, and thus was no one's property by right. Across the region, sectors undergoing disincorporation were suddenly offered dramatic inspiration

in regards to a possible escape route. They set out in hot pursuit of this loose-fish. The model was seized on and appropriated by dissenters to serve in their own local and situated political struggles. Other sectors, invested in the status quo, particular regimes, or profit streams, took completely different views of this loose-fish: for Saudi Arabia, it was a form of subversion carried on by malcontents that threatened its monopoly on correct Islamic polity; for Iran, a new assertion of Islam; for Israel, a potential threat to its security and its ideological claim to be the only democracy in the region; for some in the United States, an attractive movement that was nonetheless a contagion that could upset markets and cut against US strategic alliances (Al-Rasheed 2014; Ayoob 2014; Shlaim 2014; Quandt 2014). This section argues that diffusion is too passive, slow-moving, technocratic, and infrastructural a metaphor for the active and unruly processes of seizure and appropriation at work in translocal appropriation.

Diffusion referred to a specific phenomenon in natural sciences long before sociology took it on:

> The Latin word "*diffundere*" means "to spread out." Depositing a droplet of ink in a basin of water without stirring gives a simple demonstration of diffusion. After a few hours the colour will have spread a few millimetres and after several days the solution will be uniformly coloured. Diffusion is caused by the Brownian motion of atoms or molecules that leads to complete mixing. (Mehrer and Stolwijk 2009, 2)

The basic idea is that a particular group of particles, whether of a liquid, a gas, or even a solid, undergo diffusion insofar as although initially of a high concentration, they increasingly become less concentrated in their surrounding environment, until they are completely mixed with it, as a result of Brownian motion operating to overcome over time a differential concentration gradient.

The notion of diffusion was taken up in sociology to explain policy innovation. In this version, diffusion proceeds from stage to stage among decision-makers until an innovation is either implemented or rejected. The first stage involves actors becoming aware of the existence of an innovation, and seeking knowledge about it. The second involves persuasion, whereby receivers interact with interpersonal networks and trustworthy opinion leaders, learning more about positive and negative attributes of the innovation. The third is the decision stage, involving adoption or rejection. The fourth is implementation, where innovations are translated into actual practice, and may be adapted and reinvented in the process. The final stage

involves confirmation, where actors reevaluate whether the innovation meets expectations and decide to prolong or discontinue it (Rogers 1995). The relationship of this model to the natural science model of diffusion as Brownian motion and molecular gradient, we note, is fairly remote. The policy model posits instead stages of purposive adoption and decision-making in regards to innovation, with an eye on procedure and efficiency. In general this refers to a methodical, highly rational, policy-relevant, monitorialist, and technocratic kind of behavior, where the time, resources, and information available to adopters are abundant. In some variants of the model, unsurprisingly, the institutional positions and structural similarities of receivers and transmitters play an important role. Adopters during the Arab uprisings were not established actors in structured institutional positions formulating policy, or testing new drugs, however. Their activities were high risk. Time, capital and technological resources, along with detailed, expert, statistical and technical information, of the kind envisaged in the policy model, were not available. Moreover, adopters moved in a far speedier fashion, to "concertina" the stages in order to seize the moment. They did not advance through steps in a slow and methodical fashion, but acted more suddenly and decisively, to take the "tide in the affairs of men" at full flood. In other words, technocratic, policy-making diffusion models, while giving a clear description of decision-making stages by established actors, are not so self-evidently appropriate or explanatory in regard to the high velocity of the appropriation by high-risk actors-in-formation in the Arab uprisings.

Just as the policy-related diffusion model is quite different from the natural science model, the use of "diffusion" in social movement theory is different from the policy model. The focus in social movement theory in regard to diffusion has been far less on the lengthy, methodical, adoption, decision-process, and, overwhelmingly and repetitively, on the means, media and infrastructure of diffusion. Many social movement theorists, in keeping with their eschewal of the study of basic motivations, not to mention strategic and material interests, and their interest in *how* rather than *why* questions, have considered the issue of the *means* by which information is transmitted above all, means which are often conceived of as being out there, almost as forces of nature. The question of whether the study of the means of transmission of radical ideas and practices is usefully identified by the term "diffusion" was not thoroughly addressed when the latter term was introduced into the social movement literature (McAdam and Rucht 1993). The term "diffusion" seems to have been granted a kind of self-evident validity as a basic metaphor for understanding the translocal social life of contentious ideas. Perhaps this was because of its

aura of scientific precision, or the way it used a neutral- or official-sounding term to domesticate and render legitimate potentially highly contentious and disruptive forms of action. Or it was simply seen as a catchall, general, and abstracted term "embracing contagion, mimicry, social learning, [and] organized dissemination," among other things (Strang and Soule 1998, 266). The problem, of course, with general abstracted terms, is that they can nonetheless carry baggage, in this case naturalistic and hydraulic baggage, and when they do not carry any baggage they may simply end up as "empty signifiers," allowing no more analytic purchase than the specific concepts written into them by particular authors in sometimes ad hoc ways. The naturalistic baggage, in this case, may be a major confusion, given the sharp and "primary" frame distinction, in how we "locate, perceive and label" experience, between natural and "unguided" events (like Brownian motion) on the one hand, and "guided doings" involving "will, aim and controlling effort" on the other (Goffman 1974, 21-22). Diffusion appears impossibly to straddle both primary frameworks – a blunt, confused metaphor with misleading and ambiguous consequences.

Existing infrastructures of communication, especially social media and satellite television, but also new, private, daily and weekly print press, all of which forms of media had developed in leaps and bounds in the Middle East and North Africa region since the late 1990s (Lynch 2007), ensured a rich, speedy, and extensive flow of information outwards from Tunisia in 2011, such that any interested party was able to undertake a more or less "informed" reading of events. Communication infrastructure, what social movement theorists have called "nonrelational diffusion," involving transmission in mass and impersonal media, was a necessary condition, as it happened, for the social life of these ideas. Infrastructures of communication have long acted in this way, whether by television, radio, telegraph, or print. If there were no communications infrastructure, then there could be no mass communication. A necessary condition, however, especially one this self-evident, does not get us as far in causal terms as some seem to suppose, for whom it is enough to invoke "print capitalism" or the internet to explain the spread of particular ideas that were only expressed, transmitted and received by highly selective and particular groups or individuals. We note, indeed, that equally necessary for the existence of communication is the presence of several interested parties, motivated to give out, transmit and receive information. Without such actors, there could be no connection between points, and thus no communication.

By and large, however, during the Arab uprisings, the emission, selection, interpretation, and packaging of information, and how these moves

related to the model for collective action in question, were far from being a kind of mass, undifferentiated, Brownian motion type of diffusion. The relevant media systems did not simply channel information passively, but actively shaped the news agenda according to their ideal, material and strategic interests. As "players" engaged in strategic action (Jasper and Duyvendak 2015, 10) they cannot be analyzed as if they are natural and inert, like water and ink molecules offering a density gradient that could act as a passive medium for diffusion, especially in regard to the revolutionary ideas unleashed, which were highly problematic to many of engaged in the control and transmission of information on a mass scale. Ideational transmission in the media was heavily impacted by interests and agenda: Al Jazeera spoke in inspiring terms of "revolution," while the BBC spoke aridly of "unrest" and "clashes," often relating its coverage to diplomatic agenda. Al Jazeera played a key role as cheerleader in testimony after testimony. It was no surprise to anyone at all, on the other hand, that the Bahraini regime in 2011 immediately "used the media […] to discredit protest leaders and their lack of 'patriotism'" (Shehabi and Jones 2015, xv).

That powerful media work in this way should be no surprise. Jackson et al. (1960) is cited (in Della Porta and Tarrow 2005, for example), as an early or even classical study of diffusion, and the role of communication networks therein. In fact, the research of Jackson and his collaborators does not mention the word *diffusion*, let alone study it as a concept. Only one factor in their multicausal explanation as to why a social movement failed to gather momentum bears on communication networks. The other factors include failings in leadership, ideology, and in staging events. On closer inspection, it turns out that even the factor "communication networks" in this study is very much a shallow, intervening variable, and that its functioning hinges on the material interests that governed the actions of the Los Angeles taxpayers' organizations. In this case, the fact that the tax interests of downtown industrial and commercial property owners were at odds with the tax interests of suburban residential property owners meant that the former did not lend their organizational and communicative weight to the tax protests of the latter (Jackson et al. 1960, 37). It was material interests, then, not the structure and nature of the communication system that governed the action. Powerful communication systems, and the ideas that they circulate, are constructed and freighted with interests and strategies. They cannot be treated as inert, innocent, connecting infrastructures, a danger in social movement studies of nonrelational diffusion, that take the naturalistic and impersonal flavor of the metaphor of diffusion, as if the hydraulic flows of gases and liquids were at stake, too seriously.

Social movement theorists have also considered relational modes of diffusion, which refer to diffusion by face-to-face ties, word of mouth, and informal networks of various kinds. The importance of rumor networks for the transmission of meaningful information about French colonialism, negotiation by religious notables, and commoner resistance has been effectively excavated, for example, in regard to anticolonial protest in nineteenth-century Algeria (Clancy-Smith 1994). For some, it is a consensual finding that face-to-face ties are the "most effective" transmitters. There are reasons to doubt this general assertion, at least in its strong version where it is elevated almost to the status of a covering law. Louër's subtle study of transnational connections showed that transnational Shi'ism became indigenized in the Persian Gulf not because of any diminution of face-to-face ties, but because over time local political struggles in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, became more important than debates and struggles centered on Qom, Najaf, and Karbala (Louër 2008). Face-to-face ties in Egypt were often used to caution against action, Tunisia-style. In some cases, protestors had to extract themselves from cautious family and neighborhood environments: one form of this applied to women, who were told they could not protest as it would be shaming to appear in public: here (civil) freedom was directly counterposed to (sexual) purity. Face-to-face ties were highly segmented: some contacts were trusted on economics but not politics, in matters pragmatic, but not in matters normative. Other ties were intensive at one moment, and severed in the next.

At other points, the personal and the impersonal were deeply intertwined, partly as friendships mediated mass transmission in social media, and in constructed niche-cyber-worlds likewise, in ways that disrupted the personal/impersonal binary. Disentangling transmission by face-to-face and transmission by mass media is a fraught and problematic task, when each kind of communication created in some cases the conditions through which the other worked. It was easier to persuade neighbors of, and frame information about, the violence and corruption of the regime when images and information underlining and characterizes these things were broadcast extensively on Al Jazeera. Some viewers and listeners believed that they had a more or less personal relationship to media broadcasters, and responded to the latter's emotions and reactions accordingly. In other words, we should not, wary of social movement theory's veritable cottage industry in descriptive classification, overstate the distinction between relational and nonrelational diffusion, especially when it comes to causation. This point is particularly important in an "information age," when a primary task, especially where motivations for new and risky action are involved, is selection, not simply

a passive consumption by disinterested observers (or, alternatively, consumers) of the great flood of information "out there." The sheer quantity of information available about Tunisia, once satellite and social media got fully involved, actually intensified the need for selective, rather than wholesale forms of appropriation. The deluge of reportage implied that those who did not know what they were looking for were lost. Selective readings, moreover, were highly influenced by ideal and material interests of various parties to the communication, and the actual content of what it was that was communicated. Neither interests nor content are given sufficient attention in readings stressing the infrastructural means of diffusion.

Attentive to such problems, some have considered the more active and interested elements – such as brokers, certifiers, and movement entrepreneurs – who are involved in transmission (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 2011). The means and media of communication were certainly developed by those who validated and transmitted the model. The concepts of brokerage and entrepreneurship, however, are sharply limited by the fact that they refer to leaderships, established organizations and the logics of market and profit. The distinctive feature of the Arab uprisings, on the other hand, was that they involved the activation of initially unorganized, first-time protestors in their hundreds of thousands and even millions, in a context where credible leaderships were often lacking as a result of state repression. The unruly entrance into the political field by a diverse array of social groups, including the rural and urban poor, gave the uprisings a good deal of their force (Chalcraft 2014). Certification by powerful figures turned off some first-time movers and activists who believed that such certification diminished, rather than enhanced, the radical appeal of their claims. Activists, like pirates, are not always impressed by authority figures, and do not always grovel for the approval of those enjoying high status and cultural capital. Protestors new and established should not be seen as engaged in continuous enterprise, obeying market rules or seeking to maximize profit: they were rapidly making active connections, sometimes on a value-rational basis, under high-risk conditions, and for political purposes.

A more unruly entry point into seizure and appropriation, interests and content, can begin with the generous definition of brokerage as the "formation of new links among transmitters and receivers" (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002, 706-708). Such a definition can point us away from markets and toward creativity. The forging of new links is precisely what was at stake when it came to the seizure and appropriation of new models for collective action during the Arab uprisings. This forging involved selection among the deluge of information that was available about Tunisia and what Tunisia meant. Those

searching for routes out of violence found something that in some latent way they were already looking for: an apparently viable model for tackling deeply felt injustices. This explains why they did not respond with indifference or rejection. For such actors, what mattered was the content: Tunisia suddenly brought into focus, and crystallized a fundamental contradiction between an active, rights-bearing, sovereign people on the one hand, and the corrupted, predatory, and kleptocratic regime on the other. The people demanded and succeeded to bring down the regime. Here in vivid form was the "'people'/ power bloc contradiction" that Laclau once saw, more than the class struggle, as "the dominant contradiction at the level of a concrete social formation" which in turn constituted the "specific domain of the popular-democratic struggle" (Laclau 1979, 166). What mattered in regard to the Tunisian model, more than the media of transmission, was whether or not it provided, and was seen to provide, a new picture of the world, a new diagnosis of the situation and its dominant contradictions, and a new image of a viable path out of a situation of domination now defined with a new clarity and vividness, a track which could be taken by those getting on board the "locomotive" of new forms of collective action. A focus on means and media sidesteps these questions, avoiding issues of motivation, content, and causation, and focusing on abstract descriptions, categories and distinctions too often denuded of dynamism, stakes and significance. What was taken on, and who took it on, were arguably more important and relevant questions, in comparison to the means and media by which information was shifted, as if it were so many bales of cotton available to this or that consumer or entrepreneur or certifying authority, ready with a stamp of approval or maximizing strategy. The model for collective action was actively seized not because it resonated with some preexisting code or culture, but because it was able to give substance to an active, unincorporated normative and political imagination.

Appropriation, therefore, was fundamental: connections were made, not found. These appropriations varied greatly temporally and by relative intensity. Diffusion and transmission were just as much an effect of the multiplication of sites of appropriation as they were causes in their own right. Just as an animated flipbook presents a series of pictures in rapid succession so that an observer perceives, say, a stick-man moving from one end of the page to the other, the movement of the model across borders is an optical and cartographic effect of the fact that a number of sites seize on the idea at some geographic distance from the point of origin. What matters is neither the observer, nor the illusion of travel through space, but the seizure and appropriation of the model in various sites. Associated forms of space compression are as much effects, as they are causes, of these

appropriations, and the active search that underpins them. In fact, there are ways to grasp and specify why the Tunisian model was taken up in many, but by no means all, constituencies in the Arab world in 2011.

It is vitally important to think about "what spreads, replacing a theory of connections with a theory of connecting" (Strang and Soule 1998, 276). It seems, however, that in doing so we should avoid tautological banalities such as "practices that accord with cultural understandings of appropriate and effective action tend to diffuse more quickly than those that do not" (Strang and Soule 1998, 278). The inverse might just as well be true, especially in regard to transgressive mobilization. For example, when "cultural understandings of appropriate action" have been shattered and turned upside down by protest failure over a decade, on the one hand, and a rapidly changing horizon of possibility, on the other, as was the case for many during 2011, then a new model, such as the idea of taking on, for example, Egypt's paramilitary security forces in pitched battles, suddenly gained immense purchase. In this case, it was precisely practices that no one had previously believed to be appropriate or effective that were taken on with great rapidity. Such mechanisms were much more saliently at work in regards to explaining the immediate take-off phase of the Arab uprisings.

In their forms of seizure and appropriation, receivers were as much like pirates as they were like brokers or entrepreneurs. The Tunisian model was not transmitted because of the routine functioning of standard communications infrastructure, but because adopters emerged suddenly, like pirates, from their hideaways, or anonymous social media locations, where their actions and motivations were not widely publicized, and seized hold of circulating information, like those who would hijack ships running to schedules and timetables, creating connections that were not already there. The mode of emergence here was more like an ambush rather than a scheduled act. We see here the voracity, suddenness, surprise, and energy of the appropriators searching for a guide to novel action, where adopters cast aside the normal rules and social conventions of social interaction and pragmatism. Search and seizure, much more than circulation, was the cause of movement across borders.

This accounted for a high-velocity modular spread, which vastly outran the actions and relatively limited constituencies of "brokers" and existing leaderships. During the Arab uprisings, appropriators were not established or highly institutionalized brokers, in any case, but emergent actors engaged in highly unofficial, unauthorized, risky and uncertified action, which disrupted and altered sites and trajectories of circulation. The pattern of dissemination, rather like the movements described in Linebaugh and Rediker's (2000)

"hidden history" of the revolutionary Atlantic, was unruly and many-headed. No surprise then, that those who did take up the model were depicted by regimes, like pirates, as "villains of all nations" (Rediker 2004). Unlike a diffusion pattern, in which there is a clear center (the ink drop) and a steady and even transmission outwards to a periphery (the increasingly ink-colored water), the cartography of ideational social life was more jumbled. Geographic proximity, or the extent of established media saturation, or personal links to Tunisia, was no guide to where or among whom the model would be seized. In proximate Algeria, for example, in spite of the fact that socioeconomic protests there continued for much of the period, and followed a rising trajectory during early 2011, the model of regime overthrow was not appropriated. In relatively far away Syria, on the other hand, or in Bahrain, where media infrastructures were no more developed, this model was appropriated. In Syrian cities, where media saturation was higher, the model spread far slower than in the provincial towns and villages. While in the UAE, where there was both media coverage and extensive social media penetration, nationals and noncitizen migrants alike remained largely quiescent.

Transformation and Its Limits

The model provided a guide to action and a basis for cohesion for a new, fragile and previously fragmented collective actor – "the people," as a rights-bearing, sovereign multitude. It assisted in constituting and articulating the new, fragile, bonds of solidarity and associative links that appeared amid the radically diverse constituencies appearing in the streets. In this it implied new ways of constructing what was held in common. It gave new practices a certain meaning, given that no one otherwise would have known in advance what such new transgressions meant, especially because normal rules and beliefs were thrown into disarray. Ben Ali's departure at the hands of popular protest could not be explained by ordinary ways of seeing because it was so unprecedented. With crowds pouring into the streets in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, looking to Tunisia made sense in order to make sense of "what is going on here." It allowed protestors to say, "This is what we are doing." It provided a certain, tentative, untried map of what to do: head to the square, stay there, don't be afraid, and take on the riot police. This guide to action was a blinding flash of inspiration for many: while in Egypt, for example, there had been forceful and contentious interactions with the police and security forces, especially over the previous decade (Ismail 2006, 2012), no one had seriously considered *taking on* in pitched street battles the

paramilitary riot police in Egypt, the approximately 350,000 strong ranks of the Central Security Forces, before January 14, 2011. The whole proposition was foreign to the climate of nonviolent protest during the 2000s, and seemed ludicrously nonviable in terms of the apparent balance of forces on the ground. In Bahrain there was a similar disjuncture:

> Most observers [...] reckoned that the call [for a Day of Rage on February 14, 2011] would attract the customary small number of protesters. The regime and mainstream opposition did not seem particularly worried. Both sides expected the planned action to follow the same pattern established by Bahrain protests over the past decades. A small number of protesters would converge from different towns and villages to listen to speeches and/or march through the streets. They would quickly be dispersed by security forces and be pushed back to their neighborhoods and villages. At worst, the clashes would result in injuring a few protesters, some fatally, and the arrest of more than a hundred persons. (Khalaf 2016, 1)

What transpired was something different. Bahrain's ruling family decided that the domestic security forces were insufficient, and sought and obtained a military intervention from Saudi Arabia. The Tunisian (and now Egyptian) model enabled new expectations to be formed, and provided a basis for new forms of coordination between activists and protestors, in that it suggested a common end, and gave a rudimentary set of banners and principles under which action could be joined: bread, dignity and freedom. What was at stake, to use Snow's terminology, was more than the alignment, extension or amplification of an existing way of framing the situation, that is, of saying "What is it that is going on here?" It was more a radical transformation, a "switch" in the Weberian analogy. Here was a new "keying," in the sense meant by Goffman, which redefined activities, events, and biographies that were already meaningful from the standpoint of some key framework, in terms of another framework, such that they are now "seen by the participants to be something quite else." What is involved is "a systematic alteration" that radically reconstitutes what it is for participants that is going on (Goffman cited in Snow et al. 1986, 474). Although the details, organization, and ideology of this rekeying were hardly substantive or worked out, and strategic capacities and outcomes were highly uncertain, a new way of seeing, a new horizon of expectation, was adventurously in play.

Older agencies and methods for achieving change, such as those espoused by Al-Wefaq, the "official opposition" in Bahrain, were devalued (Khalaf

2016). Existing stakes held in older patterns of subordination (crumbs on the tables of the poor, limited civil liberties, pockets of autonomy, and patronage) were devalued by the hoped-for alternatives in regard to prosperity and democracy that hove into view on all sides. Older sources of "mere" grievance, such as the succession (*tawrith*) in Egypt, whereby the son Gamal Mubarak was supposed to accede to the presidency of the father, were now defined as intolerable and beyond the pale of political normalcy going forward. Such ideas of the politically normal were in fact brand new.

In unruly, translocal appropriation we can construe a causal mechanism relevant to the charismatic moment of early rising radical action. For protestors, the power of the Tunisian model enabled them to declare, implicitly or explicitly, in prophetic mode: "It is written, but I say unto you." In other words, the "holy scriptures" governing the rules of power, politics, and protest could be thought against, profaned, and considered inapplicable. In this case, it was not religious blessing or charismatic leadership, but unruly translocal appropriation that was at work.

Once the model was appropriated, like pirate booty, it was taken over, transformed and translated, applied to all sorts of purposes, potentially far from its meaning, form and practical application and results in Tunisia. Among US-based Leftists in the 1960s, forms and ideas drawn from the Third World national liberation struggles were adapted in "hybrid, provisional and partial manner" (Young 2006, 15). The same could be said of the Arab uprisings. What mattered now were the new contexts in which the model was applied, movement dynamics, and the ongoing course of the political struggle. There are sharp limits to reading this process in terms of mimesis. In some respects, every local context *was* different, although not necessarily in the ways power holders had said. The unruly appropriation of a new model for collective action by no means implied its success. Instead it meant its attempted application in a new political, economic, social and cultural context. This raised formidable new problems for activists of overall cohesion, organization, and strategy, especially in the face of activists' shallow organizational and ideological depth, their lack of a real mass base, the opportunities opened up for those, particularly but not only among Islamists, who worked to segment "the people," the repression wielded by regimes, the repressive or ineffective stances taken by regional and international powers, and the failure of any state to champion or export the new politics. Indeed, the very suddenness of the piratical mechanism virtually ensured that the new mass actor "the people" be highly decentralized, highly uncoordinated, and to some extent dispersible. Its hopefulness may have been quite inappropriate to the harsh realities of state repression: in

Syria for example, the regime reacted to significant challenge as it always had – with extensive and intensive repression and violence.

The forms of coeval appropriation considered here are not confined to the 2011 uprisings. It has been very important, for example, for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights, since its inception in early 2000s, to assert a similarity with the translocal BDS campaign that helped to bring down Apartheid in South Africa (Barghouti 2013). Opponents of BDS contest the analogy as best they can. Moreover, piracy should not be understood to stem above all, or in any automatic way, from recent developments in the new media, the internet, or globalization. The piracy metaphor is intended to challenge such linear, faceless, apolitical, and West-centric views. The model of the Islamic revolution in Iran of 1978-1979 was an inspiration to Islamists old and newly mined, Sunni and Shia, from Morocco to the Philippines. It was nowhere fully replicated. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Maoist and Guevarist model of the people's guerrilla war had a significant social life of its own, notably in Algeria (1954-1962), South Yemen (1963-1967), Palestine (1964-1982) and Dhofar (1965-1975) (Chamberlin 2012; Khalili 2007; Takriti 2013). Dispossessed Palestinians scattered in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and Egypt after 1948 were engaged in an active search for models of collective action. It was this as much as sociological commonality that saw them looking with intense interest at Cubans, Algerians, and Vietnamese, and their anticolonial models of the people's guerrilla war, after the Cuban revolution of 1959 (Khalili 2007). The Nasserist model, involving a revolutionary coup without an organized mass base, carried out by patriotic Free Officers against their commanders, and in the name of national independence and socioeconomic progress, was attempted (after the success of July 23, 1952, in Egypt) in Saudi Arabia and Jordan in the 1950s, and succeeded in Iraq (1958), North Yemen (1962), and Libya (1969), changing the face of the region (Chalcraft 2016).

In the colonial period, Fawzi Al-Qawuqji, the Ottoman-trained military officer and peripatetic proponent of Arab nationalist armed struggle from the 1920s to 1948, wrote in his memoirs that "[t]he doings of the hero Abd Al-Karim [in Morocco] – truly these were the inspiration to us in our revolution [in Syria]" (Qawuqji 1995, 104). Abd el-Krim himself, who led the armed struggle against Spanish and then French colonialism in Morocco in the 1920s, was impressed by the Young Turks and the republican armed struggle of Atatürk (Pennell 1986, 258). The general strike that inaugurated the Great Revolt in Palestine (1936-1939) was modeled on the Syrian example of a few months earlier. Palestinians hoped to repeat the electrifying success of the 50-day general strike in Syria, which had

just led to the French announcement in March 1936 that they would seek a treaty of independence with Syria (Nimr 1990, 87-88). Ahmad Sharif Al-Sanusi, the exiled head of the Sufi Sanusiyya of Cyrenaica, who had been conducting an armed struggle since 1911 against Italian conquest in Libya, was to be found in 1921 in northern Iraq, exhorting in Islamic terms tribesmen there to pick up arms against the British (Wahab 1967, 105). Here were indications that the rugged, patriotic armed struggles of the interwar period in Iraq 1920, Turkey 1920-1922, Morocco 1921-1926, Libya 1921-1929, Syria 1925-1927, and Palestine 1936-1939, were linked by more than just local and endogenous circumstances or nonideational translocal forms. These examples suggest that coeval ideational appropriation has a long history in the region.

In the wider world, similar forms of piracy have been at work. For example, in the case of the search for liberty among the slaves of San Domingo in the 1790s, few would have pointed to sociological, positional, occupational, or identitarian similarities between Afro-Caribbean slaves in the Caribbean and Parisian Jacobin lawyers or the sans-culottes of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, prior to the assertion by slaves that they were indeed similar to these revolutionaries, in that they were all men and thus should enjoy the Rights of Man declared in 1792 in the French National Convention (James 1963). Similarly, Cynthia Young's study shows how the US Third World Left, in the 1950s and 1960s, "turned to Third World anticolonial struggles for ideas and strategies that might aid their own struggles against the poverty, discrimination, and brutality facing peoples of color" (Young 2006, 2). This time around the model was not the First but the Third World. Young's study captures the point about the importance of an oddly underappreciated motive for looking abroad and beyond: to acquire leverage amid a locally situated political struggle. Young suggests that through acts of appropriation, local struggles could be depicted in more compelling terms. This does not go very far in conceptualizing what this "more compelling" aspect involves, but it certainly offers a fundamental rationale for the active search for spatially removed models of collective action.

These examples suggest a number of observations in regard to translocal appropriation. First, that it is not a creature of the new media or post-1990 globalization. Second that it is not a prisoner of infrastructures of connection: even where such infrastructures were highly underdeveloped by twenty-first-century standards, challengers found ways to seize on contentious ideas. As in the old Arabic proverb: *al-labib takfihi al-ishara* (For the wise man, a hint is sufficient): the idea being that in so far as merely a glimpse of an alternative can resonate with existing exigencies, it might

be sufficient to stimulate action. Third, that it is an unruly phenomenon, which does not depend on preexisting forms of similarity. Attributions of similarity may be made between widely differing constituencies for political reasons. Appropriations may not be done in propitious contexts, and are no guarantee of success. Fourth, that it is a many-headed phenomenon, capable of inspiring ordinary people (i.e., those not normally engaged in activism), to make a first-time, transgressive move into the political field, accounting for the force and capacity of the upsurge, which changes the existing balance of forces in ways that does not just rely on "brokers" or "entrepreneurs" (i.e., existing leaderships). Finally, to invoke historical examples where markets or at least capitalism were either hardly existent, or instantiated in fundamentally different and uneven ways, it helps to underline the inadequacy of market metaphors (such as brokerage) in coming to terms with the reasons why actors act to appropriate. The argument here situates such actions instead in contexts of hegemonic disincorporation. In all the examples above, subjects and citizens searching for routes out of specific forms of violence and alienation appropriated, sometimes at great speed, models for collective action pioneered by others in order to deliver trans-formation, in ways that were constitutive for subsequent collective action.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to contribute to explanations of the sudden emergence of revolutionary actors in various parts of the Arab world in 2011 by looking at the unruly, translocal appropriation of a model of collective action pioneered in Tunisia. Like the literature on ideational diffusion, it accepts that ideas play a role in coordinating the action of new movements, and can help explain their incidence, forms of cohesion, content, goals and practice. It nonetheless has suggested a number of important limits on the utility and capacity of conventional characterizations, involving metaphors of diffusion, relational and nonrelational mediation, attribution of similarity, brokerage, and movement entrepreneurship to characterize and explain why ideas cross borders. These concepts struggle to explain the motivation for the adoption of a new model. They pay little attention to power-laden forms of structure and destructure, consent, and alienation. They do not go very far in grasping and explaining how identifications of commonality across borders can suddenly come into being, or get perceived and constructed on new bases. They struggle to account for the crucial selectivity of appropriation. They do not identify the functions and purposes

of appropriated models for movements. And they struggle to account for the first-time protestors of vast masses of ordinary or nonactivist sectors. They rely too much on deterministic, natural science and market metaphors, at the expense of metaphors more adequate to unruly political dynamics.

I have suggested, therefore, that rather than thinking in terms of the outworn metaphor of the diffusion of models for collective action, we might be better served by thinking in terms of their social life. Instead of a hydraulic pattern of linear diffusion, what was at stake in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen was the social life of a contentious idea, a social life involving many-headed, sudden, high-velocity, and unruly translocal appropriation, and one not always destined for either continuous and entrenched organizational embodiment or for success. This unruly, translocal appropriation can be likened to piracy, involving search, seizure, and translation of transgressive models for collective action, which now served as the basis for new forms of solidarity among previously heterogeneous actors.

This chapter finds enabling conditions for piracy, in prior, inherited, and directly encountered patterns of hegemonic disincorporation. Feelings of injustice based on a social tension between *is* and *ought* engage the normative and political imagination in a latent and potentially unruly search for new means of collective action to address injustice. This chapter sees this search as fundamental to the motivations of those who were hugely inspired by the model for collective action unleashed by the fall of Ben Ali at the hands of the people. Attributions of similarity were rooted in these contexts, rather than in preexisting similarities of sociology, occupation, ethnicity or position. Those sectors who maintained key stakes in existing forms of hegemony tended to reject the Tunisian model as inapplicable to their situations and societies, while those experiencing a latent search for new forms of the common seized on the similarities between their interests and actions and those of the Tunisians.

What mattered were not infrastructures of communication, whether relational or nonrelational, but how such infrastructures and the information they contained were ransacked and made appropriate in a wide variety of local contexts. What was at stake was neither expert, stage-by-stage, policy adoption, nor Brownian diffusion, but the seizure of a model capable of rekeying a worldview. Exhilaration coursed through the crowd because the model was felt to be eliminating the tension between is and ought. The protagonists came from all walks of life: they were neither necessarily preexisting activists, nor were they institutionalized, nor acting according to market logics, as metaphors of brokerage, entrepreneurship, and certification tend to imply. Protagonists acted more like pirates: they rewrote the

rules of contentious interaction, or acted as if older rules were no longer applicable. Thinking in terms of piracy can assist in making sense of the forms of creative ontology and revolutionary becoming that are sometimes at work in transgressive mobilization, without explaining these forms away via structural determinism on the one hand, and without seeing them as entirely unfathomable, arbitrary, and unpredictable on the other.

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2 Routines and Ruptures in Anti-Israeli Protests in Jordan

Jillian Schwedler

Abstract

This chapter examines the anti-Israeli protests in Jordan before and after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings. The protests seldom attract more than several dozen protesters and are heavily policed; yet feel routine and uncontentious. Through careful ethnographic attention to the micropractices of this series of protests, it becomes evident that the protests do political work for both state and nonstate actors. I look beyond the self-evident claims making against centers of power and examine what various actors understand the micropractices of the protests to mean. In particular, these routine protests both maintain space for the expression of political dissent toward the regime's peaceful relations with Israel while also shoring up the regime's power.

Keywords: Jordan, protests, micropractices, script, routine, uprising

In early September 2011, protesters in Cairo breached the Israeli embassy by breaking apart a security barricade with sledgehammers and climbing through a window. They accessed what an Israeli official described as a "waiting room," where they tossed stacks of Hebrew-language documents out of the windows (Sherwood 2011). Protesters tore down the Israeli flag hanging outside, and Egyptian security forces reportedly watched without intervening for several hours. In Jordan, weekly protests since the outbreak of the uprisings across the region had been strong, but they had not reached a size or intensity that seriously threatened the regime. Still, King Abdullah II was nervous. He had already sacked a prime minister and lifted restrictions on public gatherings, reforms introduced to assuage anti-regime

sentiment. The breach of the Israeli embassy in Cairo, however, made the king particularly uneasy: Jordan and Egypt were the only Arab states that had signed peace treaties with Israel. As the regime feared, Jordanian activists took the events in Cairo as inspiration to escalate activism around their consistent condemnation of Jordanian-Israeli relations. A Facebook page announced the organization of a Million Man March[1] on the Israeli embassy in Amman, to be held a few days later, on Friday, September 16. It focused on three demands: annulling the 1994 peace treaty, expelling the Israeli ambassador to Jordan, and permanently closing the Israeli embassy in Amman. Coming just one week after the break-in of the embassy in Cairo, Israeli officials were concerned enough to evacuate all but a skeletal staff the day before the event (Greenberg 2011). Unlike in Cairo, Jordan's security forces had no intentions of watching idly. In the end, however, the protesters were far too few to push back the 1,500 security forces, let alone even come close to the Israel embassy (Agence France Press 2011): Only a few hundred protesters turned out. Instead of a march, the group held a demonstration adjacent to the Kaluti mosque in the upscale neighborhood of Rabia, more than half a mile from the embassy. The organizers expressed extreme disappointment at the turnout (Kershner 2011), although they declared the preemptory evacuation of the Israeli ambassador and staff to have been a major success (Agence France Press 2011).

The *New York Times* suggested that the Arab uprisings had created a rupture that unleashed long-simmering anti-Israeli sentiment in the two countries that had signed peace treaties with Israel (Kershner 2011). But for observers of protests in Jordan, the demonstration was very familiar. Jordanians have been protesting against the peace treaty with Israel since before the document was signed, and hardly a month has passed without a demonstration, march, or boycott raising the issue. Even more, anti-Israeli protests near the Kaluti mosque in Amman were not only frequent, they had become almost routine (Schwedler 2017). The most visible difference between the Million Man March and the other Kaluti protests was the dramatically increased security presence. The timing of the event – coming not only during the period of the Arab uprisings but also within a week of the Israeli embassy breach in Cairo – invoked the increased regime response, but the organizers had hoped for a far greater turnout as well.

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1   The organizers adopted the name symbolically and never even hoped that the crowds would reach that size; Jordan's population is approximately seven million. They had hoped, however, that the crowds would reach into the thousands. Interview with author, March 17, 2016.

This chapter examines the anti-Israeli protests at the Kaluti mosque before and after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in order to bring to light dimensions of the protests that are often overlooked. In one reading, the low turnout for the Million Man March might be read as evidence for the failure of a mass uprising to emerge in Jordan. But in another reading, that event was part of a set of protests that, although small and often overlooked, did considerable political work other than to just pressure the regime to change a policy. This chapter will examine the latter reading.

In the following section, I first briefly examine how scholars study protests and general and the Arab uprisings in particular. I illustrate how attention to micropractices can reveal political work done through protests that is often overlooked by analytic frameworks that prioritize questions pertaining to social movements or uprisings. I look beyond the self-evident claims making against centers of power and examine what various actors understand the micropractices of the protests to mean. I argue that the Kaluti protests prior to the uprising worked both to maintain space for the expression of political dissent toward the regime's peaceful relations with Israel while also shoring up the regime's power. I then turn to the specific dynamics of the Kaluti protests that took place prior to the uprising, paying close attention to the interactions between various participants and security agencies over the course of the protests. Having attended 21 similar protests, I identify routines as well as innovations, and I share insights from participants about what they understand to be happening. Finally, I examine the post-uprising Kaluti protests, noting innovations and deviations from the familiar script until July 2014, more than three years after the uprisings began. By focusing on the microdynamics of a limited set of protests, I hope to reveal the ways in which protests can do a wide range of political work, beyond that of building a movement, making a claim against a regime (or some other power), or, on the part of the state, displaying a willingness to either permit or repress dissent. The Kaluti protests maintained a space for open criticism of one of the regime's core commitments – peace with Israel – while protesters refrained from crossing a line that would invite repression. In July 2014, however, a rupture in that established script resulted in a harsher repression of some protesters and, subsequently, a loss of the regime's toleration for the events. These events together provide a richer understanding of Jordan's modest Arab uprising by bringing into focus continuities and ruptures in the practice of protests and policing around the Kaluti mosque.

Approaching the Study of Protests

In most scholarly studies, the concept of "protest" is left undefined. Protests can take a variety of forms but they always entail the possibility that humans, even those furthest from power, have the capacity for expressing dissent – an act of protest – as well as potentially realizing change as a result. Protest can be done quietly, individually, and even secretly, but not unintentionally, and not only in one's own mind. Protest is dissent translated into action, however minor, even if done without the hope of realizing change. It is "explicit [expression of] criticism of other people, organizations, and the things they believe or do" (Jasper 1997, 5). Protest can be "hidden"[2] or can range in visible actions such as whistleblowing, speaking out, demonstrating, and more; it need not be part of an organized movement.

Most studies of protest, however, focus on social movements, political parties, unions, clubs, spontaneous groups of people, and so on.[3] The unit of analysis is not the protest event, but either the organizing group or a larger "cycle" or "wave" of protests, such as a revolution or uprising. The protest event is of interest primarily because it helps to piece together a larger story. This analytic focus on the metaphorical life or cycle of a movement or uprising directs attention toward questions about the origin, development, and trajectory of the social movement or uprising. How does a movement or uprising begin, gain followers, and evolve? What tactics and strategies does it adopt or adapt? How does it utilize mobilizing resources (e.g., social media, cell phones, networks, and so on)? What are the internal dynamics of the movement or uprising? And, of course, how do various powers or state agencies respond to and interact with the movement?

Many scholars examining the Arab uprisings have adopted just such a focus, concentrating on the trajectories of the uprisings, rather than the dynamics of specific protest events. Of those, many studies employ a methodologically nationalist approach, meaning that the nation, state, or country is treated as the basic and natural political unit of the modern world (Wimmer and Schiller 2002). Scholars thus focus on the uprising in a single case, or else draw comparisons between states in an effort to understand the variations in the trajectories of individual cases (Brynen et al. 2012; Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015). Many analyses of the uprisings begin

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2   James C. Scott (1985, 1990) is credited with developing the notion of "hidden transcripts" or everyday forms of resistance.
3   Exceptions are exemplified by the work of James C. Scott's everyday forms of resistance (1985) and Lisa Wedeen's politics of acting *as if* (1999).

with the seemingly self-evident statement that the uprisings began with the self-immolation of Tunisian street-cart vender Mohammed Bouazizi and then diffused across the Arab world. It is told as the story of a rupture and a diffusion, of citizens "breaking through the wall of fear" to demand the downfall of long-despised regimes (Patel, Bunce, and Wolchik 2014). While the uprisings began in Tunisia, each state touched by the diffusion has its own beginning, the moment when protests erupt in a new state. I have elsewhere developed a critique of the limitations of comparing the uprisings to each other as discrete objects and attempting to identify the causal variables that explain differences between them (Schwedler 2015); here I wish merely to draw attention to this pattern of analysis in which protests are but events or units in some larger whole that itself is the object of analysis.

Methodological nationalism also tends to aggregate protests at a state level, obscuring the particularities of protest activities in different locales. The events in Tahrir Square, for example, have come (in the scholarship as well as in popular imagination) to represent – and are treated as representative of – the entire Egyptian uprising against the regime of President Husni Mubarak. If the central analytic question is why some mobilization succeeded in overthrowing the regime, local and regional variations melt away as nation-level stories come into view. Of course, scholars of Egypt certainly would acknowledge that Tahrir Square did not mirror the dynamics and mobilization of protests elsewhere in Cairo, let alone the rest of Egypt). As Youssef El Chazli demonstrates, the spatial dynamics of Alexandria meant that protesters on January 25, 2011, wove their way back and forth across the city, rather than seeking to congregate in a central square, as was the case in Cairo (2016, and this volume). But these variations across space are of little interest to studies that seek to explain the trajectory of the uprising as a whole. Even many scholars who have examined protests prior to the uprisings – such as the Kifaya movement in Egypt or the labor movements in Tunisia and Egypt (Beinin 2012, 2016) – retain an analytic focus that probes when and why the protests escalate to a level that challenges the regime or draws a regime response.

My concern with the dominant scholarly approaches to the study of protests (and thus the uprisings) is that these framing questions overlook other issues such as what different actors understand themselves and others to be doing, or the meaning-making that happens over the course of even a single event. Instead of seeking to explain origin and trajectory (of a movement or uprising), in this chapter I ask instead: What political work is done in the course of a protest or set of protests, and for and by whom? I explore

those questions through a close examination of the micropractices of the Kaluti protests before and after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in 2011.

Protests can do a broad range of political work in part because they have multiple audiences: participants in the protests, a wider constituency or group, a general public, a specific government agency or personnel, a regime, a foreign government, international organizations, corporations considering investment opportunities, or a global public, to give just a few examples. Asking what a protest accomplishes, therefore, requires a second question, for whom?

From 2006-2010, I attended 21 protests at the Kaluti mosque, each of which was attended by members and leaders of Islamist groups, leftist political parties, and professional associations. Each protest expressed the same three demands: expelling the Israeli ambassador to Jordan, permanently closing the Israeli embassy in Amman, and annulling the 1994 peace treaty. Some protests were held as Israel invaded Palestinian-controlled territories, others were linked to no specific event. After my third or fourth protest, I began to recognize patterns in the actions of the security services, the protesters, and by passers-by. My observations cannot be generalized to all anti-Israeli protests in Amman, or even to all of those held at the Kaluti mosque. But, they help uncover meanings and practices that are often recognized by participants but invisible or irrelevant to most life-cycle analyses. In addition to observing the protests, I conducted more than a hundred interviews with protesters and two with Public Security Directorate (PSD, or Amn al-'Amm) officers, many during protest but some before, after, or between protests. My open-ended guiding questions – What is happening? Why are you doing this (and not something else)? Why are the (security services) doing this (and not something else)? – aimed not to reveal a single narrative of a protest or set of protests, but to reveal multiple perspectives of what participants understood themselves and others to be doing and what they hoped to achieve.

Many of the insights I gained are insightful for analyses that focus on the lives of social movements or cycles of protests. Notably, recognizing routines in protests and policing enables one to better identify a rupture in those practices. From a distance, large ruptures are highly visible, such as the mobilization in Tunisia following Mohamed Bouazizi's death, or the January 25 mobilization in Egypt. But seemingly small innovations and their significance only become recognizable when routine practices come into sharp relief. Even small ruptures can be meaningful, indicating a pushing of boundaries or defiance of a previously honored red line, whether done by the security services or by protesters. Such insights can call into question commonsense understandings of when a protest cycle or an uprising began.

Anti-Israel Protests in Amman

Protests against the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty began before the treaty was signed in October 1994 at Wadi Araba, the southernmost crossing between Jordan and Israel. Early protests took place outside of the parliament (where the treaty was to be ratified), in the main downtown area, and at the Professional Associations Complex located in the western Amman neighborhood of Shmeisani, where the professional unions (*niqabat*) have offices. Criticism of the treaty was a main topic in the lead-up to the November 1997 parliamentary elections, which every opposition political party boycotted in protest of government reforms restricting press freedoms and altering the elections law in ways that gave disproportionate representation to loyalist regions (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002, 358; Schwedler 2006, 55-56). In the redistricting, Palestinians in particular found themselves in some regions with as little as one-tenth the representation of non-Palestinians (Schwedler 2010).

Most anti-Israeli protests are relatively small (a few hundred protesters), but some do escalate. On such occasions, tens of thousands of Jordanians filled the streets of many parts of the country, but most notably in the capital Amman, Irbid (a city north of the capital), and Ma'an (a small trucking town in the south). The dynamics of many large-scale protests in Jordan are exceptional from many other parts of the Middle East for several reasons. Most notably, state security forces are a powerful presence but seldom turn on protesters, and thus serious injuries and deaths are rare. Arrests are not infrequent, but detained protesters are released without being charged, usually after intimidating questioning at a distant police station.

The first large-scale and disruptive anti-Israeli protest was held in January 1997, on the occasion of the opening of the first Jordanian-Israeli trade fair. Thousands of protesters, organized by former government officials, the professional associations, labor unions, opposition political parties, and independent activists, convened in various locations around the trade fair complex in southwest Amman, effectively clogging the streets so efficiently that the fair itself – while officially inaugurated a day later than planned – saw the convention hall nearly empty (Schwedler 2005). The ecstatic protesters had utilized the then new SMS (short message service) of the expanding mobile phone industry to inform each other about such pragmatic issues as the whereabouts of security forces, which intersections had been blocked, and where the protesters were advancing unimpeded. While the regime did try to stop protesters from reaching the site by blockading nearby intersections, one minister at the time told me that they did not try very hard: The government had been experiencing particularly

tense relations with Benjamin Netanyahu and was not motivated to stop the protests entirely, which had outraged the Israeli prime minister.[4]

Over the next few years, anti-Israeli protests were held increasingly at the Kaluti mosque, symbolically important for its relative proximity to the Israel embassy but also useful because it is situated next to a large empty lot ideal for assembling protesters. Anti-Israeli protests also took place in other locations, notably at the Professional Association Complex in Shmeisani. During major Israeli aggressions against Palestinian-controlled territories, crowds in Jordan occupied many major intersections across Amman and nationwide. Large-scale protests broke out across Jordan, for example, following the outbreak for the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000. Later that fall, the regime became concerned over a ten-day sit-in in the southern city of Ma'an. Several human rights advocates and activists from Amman attempted to join the protest but were turned back by army and PSD forces, leaving them unable to reach the sit-in. Located along Jordan's main north-south trucking route to the port of Aqaba, Ma'an has been the site of many large protests in opposition to government politics. The 1989 protests against the regime's lifting of bread and oil subsidies, which led King Hussein to introduce political liberalization and democratic elections later that year, began in Ma'an before spreading across the country.

Jordanians took to the streets in large number again eighteen months later as Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield, which lasted from March 29 to May 3, 2002. During that period, the Israeli Defense Forces swept through numerous Palestinian cities, destroying hundreds of buildings in Jenin, Nablus, and elsewhere. The largest protests were in Amman, where the majority of Palestinians in the kingdom reside. They were held on seven consecutive Friday afternoons and were highly disruptive of traffic but generally peaceful. The army moved armored vehicles to many major intersections, but did not intervene to control the crowds or push them back.

For the regime, large protests are never welcome because they can be unpredictable and difficult to contain. King Abdullah openly and strongly condemned the Israeli aggression, but he was eager to contain the protests at home without being seen to oppose the strong anti-Israeli sentiment in the kingdom. The regime sought to manage the large crowds of protesters rather than to repress them, while simultaneously advancing two projects intended to demonstrate the regime's commitment to the Palestinian cause. First, the government launched a telethon to raise money for humanitarian

4   Interview with Minister of Information Marwan Muasher, May 7, 1997, Amman. Muasher also served as Jordan's first ambassador to Israel following the signing of the peace treaty.

relief for Palestinians, encouraging Jordanians to donate 10 Jordanian dinars ($14) by texting a given phone number. Second, it organized its own march through the Jordan River Foundation, a royally endorsed nongovernmental organization, or RONGO. Led by Queen Rania, the march included parliamentarians, cabinet members, and other prominent Jordanians, aiming to demonstrate government and regime sympathy for the Palestinians without yielding to the widespread demands to close the Israeli embassy in Amman and cancel the peace treaty (Schwedler and Fayyaz 2010). When the Israeli operations subsided in early May, so did the large protests across Jordan.

Many other anti-Israeli protests have taken place since the 1989 political opening, including during the siege of Gaza in 2009, when Israel's Operation Cast Lead killed 1,400 Palestinians in three weeks. Less reported in the local Arabic media (and nearly absent in the English-language press) are the many boycott events in which organizers issue lists of products to boycott and often burn them (along with Israeli and US flags) in bonfires, post blacklists of Jordanians doing business with Israeli counterparts, and organize art and music performances that clearly convey critiques of Israel, support for Palestinians, and opposition to the regime's peace treaty with Israel (Schwedler 2003).

The Kaluti Protests

The Kaluti mosque is located in the affluent neighborhood of Rabia in west Amman, on Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Street, known locally as "the street that leads up to the Israeli embassy." Situated near the bottom of a gentle hill, it is adjacent to a vacant lot to the north. Its location more than a half mile from the embassy provides both proximity as well as distance: to reach the embassy, the crowds would have to march up the road, which narrows past the field where protesters assembly. The spot is a chokehold that the regime might easily secure, but Kaluti is close enough to the embassy for protests to make a symbolic statement.

Most of the Kaluti protests are coorganized by a number of political and professional groups, but not in a consistent or coordinated manner. One or another of the groups might announce a protest, and then others will call on their numbers to turn out. The cast of participants varies, but they usually include members of the leftist Wahdah[5] party, the Jordanian

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5   Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party (Hizb al-Wahdah al-Sha'abiyah al-Dimuqratiyyah al-Urduny), formed in 1990 as the Jordanian branch of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Communist Party,[6] and the Muslim Brotherhood Society and its political party, the Islamic Action Front.[7] Leaders and members of the professional associations – doctors, lawyers, engineers, agricultural engineers, and dentists – also participate frequently. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the elected leaders of the professional associations often came from Islamist ranks, so the coordination between the professional associations and the mainstream Islamists was easy and routine, even as animosities between the groups sometimes emerged.[8]

The diversity of regular participants underlines the extent to which the role of the Kaluti mosque in the organization of the protests cannot be reduced to its symbolism as a religious space. More than a site of pious gathering following the major communal prayer of the week, the Kaluti mosque provided an adequate physical space for assembly in the same neighborhood as the Israeli embassy. Even with Islamist leaders recite Quranic passages or lead prayers at the protests themselves, the character of the events is seldom exclusively or even primarily religious.

Most protests at the mosque begin on Friday afternoon. Contrary to some perceptions, crowds do not assemble following the Friday prayer, the congregators riled up by a fiery sermon. Rather, people trickle out and gather next to the mosque and in front of it, some leaving and returning, others milling around and chatting as others arrive. Leftist protesters gather apart from the Islamists, often distinguishable by their sartorial choices as well as by their greater gender diversity. Women donning headscarves are present in the leftist as well as Islamist contingents, but they are most vocal in the former. The sizes of protests can vary substantially, but leftists typically number from 20 to 40, and Islamists from 50 to 100 or more.

Also present are various branches of the security services, occasionally in numbers that exceed those of the protesters. They arrive before protesters begin to assemble, and they include two visibly distinct contingents,

6   Founded in 1948 (Hizb al-Shuyu'iyah al-Urduny).

7   While the Muslim Brotherhood (Jama'a al-Ikhwan al-Muslimuun) and the Islamic Action Front party (al-Jabhat al-'Aml al-Islamiyyah) were institutionally separate in 1992 when the latter was formed, by the late 1990s the two had become essentially one and the same.

8   Over the past decade, the regime has worked to weaken the influence of both Islamists and leftists in numerous arenas, including the professional associations and university student councils. Given that membership in one's professional association is mandatory to practice professionally, most members pay their dues but little more. By encouraging (and likely paying) more nationalist and conservative members to participate, vote, and run for association leadership positions, the regime has steadily weakened "opposition" voices in those bodies.

and sometimes two less visible ones. First are members of the PSD. They handle most of the routine policing but are present at protests. They often cluster in groups of two to four and stand off to the side or across the street. They move casually around and through the assembly, on some occasions also chatting with protesters and handing out bottles of water. Their interactions with protesters and particularly with the leaders of the Islamist group suggest familiarity. Both leftists and Islamists confirmed to me that they knew and were friendly with some PSD officers. During one protest, on June 12, 2009, I spoke with a PSD officer who told me that the PSD routinely observed known leaders of the group during protests – leftists as well as Islamists – in order to gain information about how everyone understood the event to be going. At times, they chatted with protesters directly.

Indeed, the regime is always concerned with the possibility that the protests could escalate. Its second contingent is the Darak forces, Jordan's gendarmerie or militarized police force, which is more popularly understood to fill the role of the riot police. These forces congregate in two spots: approximately 50 meters up the road, where the protest will eventually head, and off to the far right (east) side of the empty lot. The Darak in the street are clad in riot gear but are directed by an officer without a helmet. Before the protest begins, they stand off to the left (west) side of the road, their masks raised and shields held casually, waiting for instructions. The second contingent of Darak forces, across the field, stand around eight to ten armored vehicles readily visible to the protesters.

The two remaining state forces are members of the General Intelligence Directorate (GID, known as the *mukhabarat* or secret police) and plain-clothed *baltajiya* (individuals loyal to the regime but not necessarily on permanent payroll). The GID is the security force most responsible for harassing and intimidating citizens, threatening them with physical, financial, or professional retaliation if they fail to abide by the regime's "requests." In protests, they largely play a more passive roll, monitoring and recording who is present but seldom intervening directly. The latter are the "muscle" or thugs brought in beginning in 2009 to aggressively engage protesters so that the uniformed forces do not have to. The increased presence of the *baltajiya* at protests beginning in 2010 (and through the uprisings) underlines a desire to more aggressively constrain protests without uniformed forces having to engage them physically. This move is likely due in no small part to widespread recording of protest events by protesters, bystanders, and journalists.

The protests themselves begin gradually, with people assembling next to the mosque and milling about, chatting with each other. A small truck

arrives and Islamist leaders pass out the green flags of the Muslim Brother-hood, while leftists congregate with flags representing their parties, most frequently the red flags of the Wahdah and the Jordanian Communist par-ties. Other protesters carry Palestinian or Jordanian flags, as well as placards that may be hand drawn or more professionally produced. Some protesters don the black-and-white *kufiyyah* (headscarf) that in Jordan symbolizes Palestinian nationalism and resistance; some cover the face "Hamas-style" (as one Jordanian described it), while others draped the scarves around the neck.

The events will often "begin" with Islamist leaders reciting passages from the Quran and leading a prayer. Often, leftists will chant or begin a call and response, sometimes seemingly in an attempt to drown out the prayer. Most commonly, chants include "No to the Zionist entity, no to the peace treaty!," "Zionist entity out of Jordan!," and "The Jordanian people stand with the Palestinian people!" The protesters usually come together into a single crowd for a short period, visible by the mingling of red and green flags in the assembly; at other times the two camps remain distinct, even if adjacent to each other.

Jordan's leftist parties and Islamist groups have a long history of engag-ing with each other, particularly in opposition to specific government policies (Schwedler 2006, 2011; Clark 2006). They began holding joint press conferences as early as 1992, expressing shared concerns over changes in the electoral law, restrictions on press freedoms, and the overall reversal of democratic openings that took places over the course of the 1990s. Islamists and leftist were also well represented in the professional as-sociations, which became a kind of proxy democratic public space as the opportunities to express dissent in the parliament steadily decreased. But the groups were not without tensions. Leftists in particular disliked the Quranic readings and prayers at protest events and rallies, and often sought to chant over the religious rhetoric. Younger Muslim Brotherhood supporters took particular affront to leftists during such moments, although Islamists leaders generally tried to keep the calm and ignore the leftists. On some occasions, younger Brothers even get into fights that begin with shouting and sometimes escalate into shoving and even punching, until Islamist leaders or the PSD break it up. I attended a rally[9] at the Professional Association Complex in June 2010 but after four hours needed to leave for an interview. One activist told me, "Don't leave before

9   The rally was held to honor the Jordanians who were aboard the flotilla that departed Istanbul on May 31, 2010, aiming to bring aid to Gaza, which Israel had blockaded.

the Brothers and leftists get into a fight!" Curious, I remained and within the hour, shouting turned into shoving until PSD officers and one Islamist elder broke up the small melee. While I witnessed such incidents on only a few occasions, the antagonism between the sides and the possibility of a fight is not unusual, even at events supported by groups across the political spectrum.

At the Kaluti protests, the assemblage will gradually move off the curb and into the street after an hour or so of gradual congregation and chanting on the sidewalk or field adjacent to the mosque, attempting to shut down traffic. The drivers of cars and trucks seem more annoyed than concerned, and they creep forward to make their way through the crowd as long as possible.[10] The PSD and Darak forces continue to stand off to the side and make minimal effort to stop the protesters or keep traffic flowing. Once the road is clogged, an officer will direct traffic away from the street and sometimes assist trapped drivers in backing out of the crowd blocking the street.

This period, with the mass of people in the street and the PSD the nearest of the security agencies, can last as little as fifteen minutes or more than hour. Eventually, the leftist contingent will begin to move north up the road a few steps at a time, broadly in the direction of the Israel embassy. As this period approaches, the Darak assemble in a line well up the street but blocking the possibility of the protesters' advance up the road. At that time, the forces don their helmets and line up shoulder-to-shoulder, while two or three more senior Darak officers move around giving orders and organizing the line. The forces line up at the same location, directly opposite of the doorway for building number 114. Until the protesters approach that location, the security forces do not interfere in the protesters' activities.

Before any possible tension increases in anticipation of a confrontation between protesters and the Darak forces, the Islamist contingent departs. This dynamic was pointed out to me in 2008 by leftist protesters. "Watch the green [Muslim Brotherhood] flags disappear; the Islamists are afraid of actually confronting the police," said one. They mocked the timidity of the Islamists – a perspective that I had heard on previous

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10   Indeed, on more than on occasion, I have encountered a protest while in a taxi, and the driver has expressed aggravation or frustration at the protesters. Their comments remind me of living in Washington, DC, where traffic disruptions from protests are routine. But as Jordan is not a democratic country, it is interesting to note the extent to which protests are a routine part of life in the capital, so much so that citizens are more annoyed than concerned.

occasions – suggesting that the Brothers' avoidance of any real confrontation with the regime proved that they had been co-opted. One activist argued that Islamists wanted to be photographed at protests so that they could display to their supporters their opposition to the regime, while "in reality they try really hard to avoid any real confrontation" (interview with Hisham Bustani, January 13, 2007, Amman). Such a view of Islamists as avoiding real contention with the regime is echoed among many leftist and independent activists.

Hamzeh Mansour, a prominent leader of the Islamist movement who has served as secretary-general of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), pushed back against this characterization during an interview in 2003. He said that they (the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF) viewed the Palestinian cause as among their core missions. To that end, they regularly worked with other political parties as well as the professional associations to coorganize protests and support each other's events. But they tried to avoid confrontation with the security forces because they feared the presence of instigators who aimed to make trouble or cause property damage in order to give the security forces a reason to respond harshly or shut down the event, or to portray the Islamists in a poor light. "When we see people we do not recognize, we are concerned that they will disrupt the peaceful nature of the event by throwing stones or breaking windows or lights."[11] The Kaluti protests of the mid-to-late 2000s were not disrupted by such instigators, however; the Islamists simply departed as the protesters advanced slowly toward the Darak line blocking the road.

At the Kaluti protests, the now predominantly leftist protesters gradually move closer to the Darak line, but there is little sense that the impending confrontation will turn violent. In fact, the street itself is never entirely blocked, and people – passers-by, journalists, and even members of the assemblage – can easily walk freely around the back and sides of the police line. The appearance is one of the protesters performing an effort to march on the Israeli embassy more than actually trying to do so. For their part, the Darak forces play their own role of "stopping" the protest's advance – standing in a line with shields raised that signifies "You shall not pass!" without actually blocking off the entire road. Armored Darak vehicles across the field to the east do always signal a willingness and capacity for repression, however, should it be necessary.

11   Interview at IAF offices, Amman, December 10, 2003. This interview concerned the Islamists' experiences with protests in general, and did not discuss the more routine Kaluti protests discussed here. He did speak of an earlier effort to hold a major protest at the site in 2002, but on that occasion the security forces blocked access to the site and the event was consequently canceled.

As the distance between the protest and the police vanishes, women often take the lead in the chants. One female activist told me that they did so in order to dare the police to violently repress women who are peacefully protesting, particularly with photographers heavily present. The protesters do not attempt to break through the police line, but some limited pushing is not uncommon as the protesters and police finally meet. This final period of confrontation can last as little as ten minutes or more than an hour, depending on the energy of the crowd.

In June 2010, a new actor appeared at the Kaluti protests: the *baltajiya*, plain-clothed supporters of the regime brought in to serve as "muscle" to create a buffer between protesters and the uniformed security forces. These men hold hands and form a line facing the protesters, their backs to the uniformed police. One Wahdah protester told me, "I think they[12] are doing this so that they have an excuse to get physical but [the government] can deny responsibility; even if it is caught on camera, they'll say it wasn't them" (interview during a protest, June 2, 2010). The faces of these plain-clothed men express hostility as they glare at the protesters and journalists alike. They glare menacingly not only at protesters but also at reporters and others observing the protesters, as if threatening them to stay back. The police, however, focus their attention on the protesters themselves, largely ignoring journalists and other observers as they move in and out of the crowd, even around the back of the police line itself.

Jordanians have been protesting actively in Jordan since the political liberalization of 1989, and even with the reversal of many of those reforms they have never stopped. In November 2010, the IAF and Wahdah parties both boycotted the parliamentary elections and called for the king to withdraw from governance and allow a real constitutional democracy to emerge. Protests escalated in size and frequency, but most did not represent a significant rupture from existing protest routines.[13]

By September 2011, protesters gathered at Kaluti almost weekly since the uprising began, and some of the activists began to refer to themselves as the Kaluti Group, as did the media. Their Million Man March failed to attract the numbers they had hoped, but the protests at the site continued. In July 2014, large protests across Amman erupted in response to the launch of

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12   I understood "they" to refer to the regime, but I did not have the opportunity to follow up for a more specific answer about who she thought had given the order to bring in these men.

13   A full review of the ruptures that did emerge is outside of the scope of this chapter, but will appear in my forthcoming book, *Protesting Jordan*. Also see Tobin (2012); Ryan (2014); and Yom (2014).

Israel's Operation Protective Edge in which more than 2,300 Palestinians were killed and 10,000 injured, including 3,000 children, over a seven-week period (Maan News Agency 2015).

During that period, some dozen Kaluti Group protesters broke routine: despite the heavy police presence, they pushed passed the Darak line in an effort to make their way up the street in the direction of the Israeli embassy. They were stopped well short of their goal, but their willingness to violate the understood script led to their arrest. Their arrest was announced via loudspeaker to those remaining with the main protest near the mosque. All were released later without being charged.

The Work of Protests

If the Kaluti protesters were not trying to actually reach the Israeli embassy all those years, what were they doing? In 2010 I asked one independent activist, What would happen if you just decided to start the protest farther up the street, closer to the Israeli embassy? Without hesitation he said, "They would arrest us and beat the shit out of us" (interview with Hisham Bustani, June 14, 2010, Amman). The protests would be shut down, he said, and they would not be able to protest at all. But reaching the embassy was not the objective as much as protesting against it.

The question of whether to seek political change by working "within" the system or outside of it is a perennial one for activists. Adhering to state-imposed boundaries limits possibilities for change but affords greater room to operate; crossing known red lines invites swift repression. The actors in the Kaluti group protests may have brought different agendas to the events, but they largely adhered to the script that enabled them to carry out the protests with regularity over the years. The protests were contentious to the extent that they consistently called for the end of a treaty that the regime was committed to maintaining; however, the protesters' adherence to a script that had been learned and adopted over time had a practical effect of deflating the protests of more contentious dynamics: they had become routine, mundane, almost ritualistic. The blasé attitudes of many bystanders, onlookers, and drivers caught in traffic further suggest that the protests did not even register as even potentially politically contentious. In that sense, their adherence to behavior acceptable to the regime also worked to shore up the regime's own authority.

What, then, were the protesters getting from the protests? What kinds of political work were they doing, and for whom? And what did each understand themselves and others to be doing? In talking to protesters, it is

clear that a primary reason for holding protests, even constrained ones, is to keep open the crack that allows for the open expression of political dissent, particularly around Jordan's relations with Israel and the rights of Palestinians everywhere (but particularly in Jordan). The work of the protests was not only to express specific claims against the regime (abrogation of the peace treaty, etc.), but also to affect public discourse. In this case, the protests keep the widespread disapproval of the treaty present in the public spaces.

All protests, and thus all actors in protests, have numerous audiences. For the protesters, these include: passers-by, some curious and others shouting words of encouragement or of condemnation at the protesters; the Jordanian body public; journalists and others recording or photographing the event; and the regime. Protesters also participate for themselves, and for their followers, to show their own continued relevance as well as for affective reasons and building solidarity.

For all the protesters, the Darak forces serve for as a proxy for the regime, in that confronting security forces symbolizes confronting the regime and its policies as well much as it entails a real physical confrontation. But protesters direct their chants at the Darak officers themselves, calling them out for their service to a regime that has betrayed the Palestinian struggle by making peace with the enemy. Here the presence of the leftists at the last stage of the protest is as meaningful as the Islamists absence: only the leftists are immediately shouting at the Darak, confronting them face-to-face. Thus the Islamists, in their absence by that stage, are not participating in the critique directed at the individual Darak officers.

Leftists also have Islamists as an audience, daring them to be more contentious than they are willing to be, and exposing their unwillingness to directly confront the regime. Islamists appear little concerned with leftists or leftist critiques of Islamists, but as a movement and party they are plenty concerned with their own constituency. Journalists from the Islamist weekly *Al-Sabeel* photograph the Islamists and their flags and report on their presence at protests, expanding the Islamist audience from those who came out to the protest at the leaders' requests, to include those who follow Islamist media but are not present at the events.

The Islamist leaders are clearly concerned with the regime, more so in the late 2000s than in earlier periods. In the 1990s and early 2000s, they were visible participants in many contentious protests, including several at which Islamist leaders were injured. At the Kaluti protests, however, the leaders and their ranks routinely exited well before the other protesters moved into closer confrontation with the Darak.

For the regime, allowing the protests supports its declared commitment to freedom of expression. King Abdullah has boasted to his allies that Jordan is a "moderate" regime working to implement democratic reforms, but real political freedoms have steadily declined. Protests that are widely photographed provide tangible evidence that the regime tolerates political dissent. Indeed, several protesters told me that the ability to protest on highly political issues was by the late 2000s the only remaining political freedom in Jordan. With the parliament, the professional associations, and media all tightly constrained and conveying overwhelmingly proregime perspectives, protests are one of the few remaining arenas for expressing political dissent. The regime tolerates rather than encourages protests, and always seeks to keep them contained.[14] And as long as the protesters adhere to the established script, routine protests also work to produce and reproduce the regime's power.

Protests can do other work for the regime, as in 1997 when the first Jordanian-Israeli trade fair was effectively shut down by hundreds of protesters choking access to the exhibition hall. The regime might have more aggressively pushed back the protesters, but instead let the protests do the work of interfering in normalization at a time when government officials and King Hussein were frustrated with the actions of the Israeli prime minister. The protests proved a useful interruption, and one that the regime could also portray as illustrative of emerging democratic life in Jordan. At the same time, the regime sought to monitor and manage protests, lest the crowds become too large or difficult to easily contain. The heavy Darak presence, the armored vehicles, and the appearance of the *baltajiya* betray regime concern that protests might escalate. Protests keep alive the possibility of serious challenge to the regime, which remains vigilant in preparing for (and seeking to prevent) that moment.

As scholars of protest have recognized, regimes also can gauge public sentiment by watching protest activity closely for changes. The Kaluti protests played this role for the regime. With the protesters seldom numbering over 200, a sharp escalation would provide the regime with valuable information. Similarly, the failure of the Million Man March in September 2011 to bring out a significantly larger-than-usual crowd conveyed its own message, to the regime as well as the organizers. But even at their most routine, the Kaluti protests kept present the possibility of a larger mobilization, signaling to the regime that they would not go away.

14   My current book manuscript, *Protesting Jordan*, explores the regime's preference for small, stationary protest events, rather than larger events or marches. What the regime permits or forbids also varies by neighborhood.

Finally, not immediately present but still members of the audience for the Kaluti protests are Israel and the Israeli embassy officials up the road; the regime, which maintains the peace treaty; the parliament, which ratified the peace treaty; the United States, which considers Jordan a key ally and watches the kingdom closely; and other foreign nations.

Many Amman residents encounter the Kaluti protests but do not exhibit a sense of concern or danger about them. Passers-by sometimes stop to watch but, just as often, they continue walking up or down the street without so much as a turned head. The heavy presence of the Darak – with their armored vehicles and a line of officers in riot gear blocking much of a street – simply does not elicit concern, even though Jordan is not a democracy. I have often hired a taxi to drop me near to a Kaluti protest and have on several occasions witnessed the driver register exasperation at the ways in which protests disrupt traffic. Photographs of protesters confronting riot police suggest danger and potential violence. But that possibility – while always present – is often understood to be so remote that it does not register with bystanders and passers-by.

Protests may be a central form of contentious politics, but they do other kinds of political work as well. In particular, what the protests mean, and to whom, extends well beyond the straightforward narrative suggested by a regime-opposition confrontation. Protests that might seem to be failing – in their diminishing numbers and failure to produce real policy changes – may be quite productive in other ways.

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3 Shaping Contention as a Salafi Movement

The Rise and Fall of Ansar al-Sharia in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia

Frédéric Volpi

Abstract

The rise and fall of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST) in the aftermath of the 2011 Tunisian uprising is indicative of the opportunities and pitfall of institutionalization of revolutionary movements in situations of democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa. AST's failure to become a leading player of the Tunisian political transition is a direct consequence of its strategic confrontation with other Islamist and secularized players seeking to impose a new identity on the Tunisian state and society. On closer inspection, the origins of this confrontation can be traced to the intestine struggles within AST, between different ideological trends, and between the leadership and the base to define the identity and practices of the movement.

Keywords: Tunisia, mobilization, democratic transition, Salafism, repertoire, contention, identity

The Tunisian revolution started the 2011 Arab uprisings and brought to light key aspects of regime change in the region. Regime change in Tunisia also revealed the complexities of social activism in the country that were previously quashed by a police state. In particular, a highly visible aspect of grassroots activism after 2011 was Salafi religious, social and political mobilization. This raised the question of how a movement with no previous history as a mass-based organization could became a

serious challenger for both state institutions and established social move-
ments – how new individual and collective identities could crystallize
into a powerful religious activism, that would then break down after a
couple of years.

During the Tunisian democratic transition, the activism of previously
co-opted and repressed social and political players, such as the Tunisian
General Labor Union (UGTT) and the Islamists of the Ennahda movement,
molded the reinstitutionalization process (Beinin 2016; Filiu 2015). Yet the
uprisings and transition episodes also enabled many new players to enter
the arena of contentious politics and make their mark. For "old" players,
the fall of the regime provided an opportunity to reengage with the state
and to redraw the formal boundaries of the arena of political contention.
The wider arena of social contention opened up by the contingent process
of a leaderless uprising was itself also crucial in reforming "old" players'
identities and practices, as well as in shaping those of "new" players who did
not have much of a voice before. The rise and fall of the Salafi movement
Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST) between 2011 and 2013 illustrates well some
of the complex interactions between arenas and players, as well as between
players themselves in a context of rapid institutional changes.

What we can view as a unitary player from one perspective, we can al-
ternatively portray as an arena of contestation where constituent members
fight for the direction and identity of their movement. In the following,
Ansar al-Sharia is analyzed first as a player competing against other social
and political players to shape arenas of contention and of governance
in post-uprising Tunisia, and second as an arena of contention over the
meaning and practice of Tunisian Salafism. I challenge the assumption
that there is a predefined (Islamist) constituency in the polity simply
waiting to be mobilized by specific (Islamist) players. Different social and
political players became AST through diverse and contingent processes
of mobilization. In its turn, the formulation of the AST political project
itself was shaped by the (difficult) integration of diverse constituencies
of activists.

AST's formative period was marked by "transformative events" (Sewell
1996), which reshape the form and content of arenas of contention, from
the local to the national. Nationally, they enabled the activities of previ-
ously excluded Salafi players. These institutional changes – particularly
breakdowns – facilitated new logics of situation and action (Dobry 2009)
over established behavioral routines. The coming together of AST and its
eventual downfall were in large part attributable to the strategic interactions
between Salafi political entrepreneurs and Salafi grassroots sympathizers,

and between these Salafi players and other Tunisian social and political players. Yet the identity of the movement and of its members, as well as its ideological and political orientation, remained contentious throughout the transitional period.

The recognizable Salafi ideological repertoire put forward by AST's emerging national leaders coevolved with the more idiosyncratic, emotional, and immanent appropriations and interpretations of Islamist themes and practices by self-made grassroots Salafi players who constructed their religious orientations mainly during the transition. The activism of AST players combined practices derived from preexisting Salafi and/or national repertoires of contention with newer practices derived more directly from the arenas of contention produced by the uprisings and state deinstitutionalization. In their turn, the interactions between new and old players and the new democratizing Tunisian state, as well as the interactions between the players themselves, slowly reshaped a new, post-revolutionary arena of contention structured by democratic institutions.

Arenas of contention are the physical and material sites where players can shape and consolidate their identity and practices via the strategic interactions that link them to their arena and to other players (Jasper 2011). Ansar al-Sharia represented such a tentative consolidation of new identities and contentious practices during an episode of deinstitutionalization and reinstitutionalization of the Tunisian state. This process and its outcomes were not "predefined" by Salafi discourses and practices, and their (in)compatibility with democratic institutions. Instead, the interactions between the grassroots sympathizers inspired by a "revolutionary" praxis and the Salafi elites make it difficult for the cadres of the movement to impose a political discipline. In its turn, this set of interactions increased over time the level of the strategic confrontations between AST and other players of the Tunisian democratic transition.

The strategic confrontation between pro-state players seeking to entrench the formal arena of contention of a liberal democratic political order and AST players challenging these state-imposed boundaries eventually led to the collapse of AST as a unitary player. The consolidation of the institutions of the state enabled state players to exclude AST from the formal arena of political contention by declaring it an illegitimate and illegal player (i.e., a terrorist organization in this case). Unable to sustain a high enough level of popular mobilization in the face of an increasing level of state repressive practices, AST dissolved back into a multiplicity of Salafi identities and players.

Islamist Players and Contention in Tunisia before the Arab Uprisings

The defining features of social and political (de)mobilization in Tunisia under authoritarian rule were the limited arenas of contention that were left open to Islamist and non-Islamist opposition players, who in turn developed specific repertoires of contention in response to repression. The anticolonial movement that had become the leading political force in Tunisia at the time of independence, the Neo-Destour Party of Habib Bourguiba, advocated a secularized nationalist discourse as the foundation of the postcolonial state. While Islamic-minded players had contributed to the construction of a Tunisian national identity shaped by Islamic culture, they had not coalesced into a structured political force at the time. For most of the 1960s and 1970s the main political debates and tensions in the country revolved around the opposition between leftist and liberal political players. The repeated changes of political orientation of the Bourguiba regime (toward the left in the early 1960s and then back toward the right in the early 1970s) were accompanied by a steady increase in authoritarian political practices. The violent confrontation between the UGTT and the regime in late 1978-early 1979 resulted in nationwide riots which required the intervention of the army (Beinin 2016). Although ultimately unsuccessful, this protest event would induce the regime to initiate a (short) period of political liberalization in the early 1980s that widened the scope for contentious politics. During this period of authoritarian relaxation Islamists emerged as recognizable political players.

The Movement of Islamic Tendency (MIT), which would later become Ennahda, was formally launched in 1981 with the objective of obtaining legal recognition as a political party. Islamist mobilization inspired by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had been growing in the country in the 1970s, mainly via *dawa* (proselytizing) networks advocating a cultural revival of Islamic teaching and practices (Burgat 1993). Increasingly popular among both a conservative public and religiously minded youth, the movement cofounded by Rashid Ghannushi sought to use the new liberalizing rhetoric of the regime to gain public recognition and avoid open repression. Unsettled by the emergence of a new opposition player whose religious identity ran counter to the secularizing identity of the state, the Bourguiba regime refused to legalize the MIT and jailed its principal leaders. They would remain in jail until the nationwide "food riots" of 1984, which forced the regime into another short period of political liberalization that included an amnesty for all political prisoners.

In the mid-80s, increasingly repressive practices by the state expanded the strategic confrontations between Islamist players and the regime (Allani 2009). As interactions became more violent, the identities and preferences of both sets of players began to change. In 1987, the Tunisian authorities charged that some members of the MIT had been planning an armed insurrection against the regime, and the death penalty was pronounced against Islamist players. The ruling elites' strategic use of violence against the Islamists not only reshaped the interaction between Islamist and state players and threatened the internal cohesion of the MIT, but it also weakened the grip of an ageing president Bourguiba over the regime. At the end of 1987 Bourguiba's new prime minister (and former interior minister), Ben Ali, deposed the president in a palace coup. As Ben Ali sought to consolidate his authority within state institutions, he endeavored to contain external challenges to his legitimacy as president by proposing a new period of political liberalization.

The leadership of the MIT, now renamed Ennahda, reaffirmed its reformist, nonviolent political identity in the early days of the Ben Ali regime as leniency from the ruling institutions facilitated a modest redrawing of the formal arenas of political contestation (Tamimi 2001). Although the movement was not at the time a legally recognized political organization, it was able to present its members as independents candidates to the 1989 parliamentary elections. Ennahda-affiliated candidates obtained abound 15 percent of the vote according to the official results and about 30 percent, according to independent observers (Dunn 1996; Daoud 1991). These relative gains made by Tunisian Islamist players, and the dominance of Islamist players in the democratic transition taking place at that time in neighboring Algeria, encouraged the Ben Ali regime to roll back its democratic reforms in order to retain political control. In the months and years that followed the elections, state repression targeting Ennahda increased and most of its leaders once again were either jailed by the regime or, like Ghannushi, forced into exile. Significantly, this transformation of the domestic arenas of contention did not break down the reformist identity and electoralist strategy that the leadership of the party had articulated during the political opening.

In response to Algeria's civil conflict, which from 1992 onward pitted a military-backed regime against armed Islamist guerrilla groups, the Tunisian regime increased its repression of all Islamist players. The hardening of the Ben Ali regime shrank the political arenas for all social and political players, regardless of their ideological orientation (Camau and Geisser 2003). At the turn of the century, the identity of the Tunisian regime turned on its

repression of and ideological opposition to Islamist players, as reaffirmed through the new security discourse and policies of the "War on Terror" that permeated the international arena after the 9/11 Al-Qaeda attacks in the United States. With social and political contestation severely limited by the security policies of the state in the 2000s, Islamic-minded players explored two main strategies of activism.

First, there was growing interest in Salafi-jihadism, even though for the most part the players attracted to this identity did not translate this ideational involvement into concrete actions. Salafi-jihadi players with links to transnational networks such as Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) occasionally mounted operations in Tunisia, such as the 2002 bombing of the Djerba Synagogue. Nonetheless, they were unable to significantly modify the repertoire of contention of Islamism in Tunisia which, by choice or by default, remained predominantly nonviolent. The 2007 dismantling by Tunisian security forces of the "group of Soliman" – named for the location of their only and final showdown with the police – showed the limited outreach of Salafi-jihadi discourse and networks in the country at the time (Wolf 2013). Second, as an alternative to violent contention, the main form of activism during the 2000s was a "scientific" type of Salafism that concentrates on the Islamization of the individual and articulates itself on friends and family networks. While this ultra-conservative Islamic identity influenced by Wahhabism had been present in the country since the 1970s, it made ground in the 2000s due to the weakness of other Islamist players (such as Ennahda) and a particularly constrained arena of contention which only left room for microsocial activism (International Crisis Group 2013b; Merone and Cavatorta 2012).

Prior to the 2011 Arab uprisings, Islamist networks of all orientations were not organized at the national level due to intense police surveillance. With no political activities tolerated, and the mosques under tight police control, activists could only articulate dissenting cultural and religious views within small local circles, which were also mostly disconnected from the global Islamist discourse due to heavy state control over the media and internet. Hence, Islamists were not able to evaluate the influence and appeal of their views in Tunisian society shaped by secularized state policies, nor were they able to fully appreciate the specificities and strength of the different approaches to Islamization in the larger Islamic public sphere.

Social Mobilization and Islamization in the Wake of the Tunisian Uprising

In the immediate aftermath of the Tunisian uprising (2011-2012), the synergies and tensions between Salafi political entrepreneurs and rank-and-file Salafi sympathizers shaped the identity of Ansar al-Sharia in a context characterized by fluid boundaries between arenas of contestation and weak state institutional order. Islamist and Salafi players were not spearheading the street protests that slowly gained momentum in December 2010 after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in the provincial town of Sidi Bouzid. Groups and individuals participated in an ad hoc fashion in protest events for a multiplicity of reasons, usually at first in relation to specific local dilemmas and dynamics (Allal 2011). Even as these protests snowballed into a nationwide uprising by the turn of the year, this "leaderless/leaderfull" movement was not at the time orchestrated by one or a few structured national social and political players. The leaderless character of the protests at the time is probably best described as a case of a multiplicity of local leaders (hence *leader-full*) who were not part of an overarching organization. Localized protest dynamics reflected the mobilization of multiple players trying to obtain different concessions from local and national authorities, as well as acts of revenge, self-promotion, economic opportunism, and so on (Volpi 2017). Across the board, the anti-regime rhetoric and practices were not particularly colored by Islamic identity markers.

As the uprisings gained further momentum in the first half of January 2011, some of the better-structured (and previously co-opted) opposition forces in the country, such as the UGTT, began articulating more programmatically and strategically the demands of the protestors (Beinin 2016). The UGTT's call for a national strike initially launched in Sfax on January 12 provided a useful framework for the anti-regime protests. Ben Ali's departure on January 14, 2011 deepened the process of deinstitutionalization of the state and reconfigured the national arena of contention. Pressure from the street and from opposition players led the transitional government to implement swiftly a general amnesty of political prisoners and to set up simple administrative processes to legalize political organizations. At this juncture, Islamists players made a noticeable return to the arenas of contentious politics. They not only reentered national politics, but also competed locally against other social movements to gain influence in the local councils, as well as sought to gain control of the religious institutions previously controlled by the state (Volpi, Merone, and Loschi 2016).

In the spring of 2011 Islamist networks of all orientations scrambled to organize themselves and to obtain legal recognition in Tunisia. The Ennahda party was legalized on March 1, 2011. The Hizb ut-Tahir movement also attempted to become a political party, but was turned down the first time around – it would become officially recognized the following year. The Ansar al-Sharia movement was formally launched in late April 2011, but it did not seek legal recognition as a political party. New Tunisian Salafi associations and parties also emerged progressively over the months, including Jabhat al Islah, which became a political party in 2012, Hizb al-Asala, and Hizb Arrahma. The formal establishment of parties and associations was a direct consequence of the changing institutional order in the Tunisian polity and the redrawing of the boundaries of the arenas of formal political contention. Beyond formal institutional changes, however, complex mobilization processes empowered these organizations in different ways as a result of new strategic interactions between new and old players (Donker 2013).

The AST organization launched by Abou Ayadh was in April 2011 mainly an empty shell structured around a small network of older Salafis who had participated in international armed jihadism and spent time in Tunisian jails. Its main public presence was online, in the social media, notably through the al-Qairawan Media Foundation, with postings on blogs, a Facebook pages, etc. (Branson 2014). Through these outlets, the leaders and cadres of the new organization advocated a mixture of common Salafi themes and Tunisian-framed interpretations (notably the views of Al-Idrissi, even though he never joined AST). These Salafi players sought a national audience and local supporters in order to compete with other Islamist and other non-Islamist players in a liberalized public sphere.

Grassroots support for Ansar al-Sharia grew throughout 2011 and 2012 in the context of a reconfiguration of the local arenas of contention within the formal and informal religious space. Until the uprising, the regime had tightly controlled the mosques, and imams had to deliver sermons preapproved and in some case provided by the Interior ministry. As the repressive apparatus of the regime fell apart at the beginning of 2011, groups of mosque-goers took it upon themselves to evict the official imams from their local mosques and to replace them by local religious players. While some of the new imams were old Islamist opponents of the regime previously associated with Ennahda or Islamic scholars not involved in social activism, in many poor urban neighborhoods these new religious "authorities" were young activists who gained recognition in the weeks that followed the uprising (Merone 2016). These self-made Imams and their associates were able to establish themselves because they were commonly the first ones to

take action against state-appointed religious personnel in their neighborhood. Once in place, they sought to legitimize their presence by linking up with more structured and higher profile Islamist players (interview, Bizerte, November 2015). AST was a main product of this encounter between established Salafi players in search of an audience and local activists in search of guidance and recognition.

For new grassroots Salafi players, the flexibility of the AST discourse and the autonomy given to local activists gave AST a competitive advantage over stricter Islamist organizations like Hizb ut-Tahir (interview with a former AST sympathizer, Medenine, October 2014). In the early days of the transition, the AST brand grew by spontaneous affiliation of local Islamist youth who found in this organization an umbrella structure providing user-friendly ideological resources and theological expertise. At that time, three sets of interactions were particularly important for the success of the movement. First, AST leaders debated among themselves the issue of the primary orientation and identity of AST as a mass-based movement. Second, the interactions between the base and the top of the movement kept reshaping the internal rules and chain of command of the organization. Third and last, the relations between AST groups and other local Salafi groups inspired by AST but not formally part of the movement kept fluctuating as a function of changing political circumstances.

Permanent Revolution versus Institutionalizing Political Salafism?

The definition of a distinct Salafi arena of contention as a result of strategic competition between Salafi, Islamist and secularized players characterizes the beginning of the new democratic Tunisian model (2012-2013). Grassroots mobilization turned into a more structured model of militancy that entrenched AST as a recognized, unitary social and political player contesting the dominant narrative of state reinstitutionalization. The efforts made to structure the rapidly expanding movement were visible at AST's second national congress in Kairouan in May 2012. Over 5,000 local representatives from all over the country met to discuss the general orientations of the movement (Merone and Cavatorta 2012). National leaders sought to formalize the role of the grassroots Salafi players who had joined the movement by including them in centralized national organization. The AST leadership also sought to maintain open channels of communication with the then ruling party, Ennahda, by having some of their cadres of the

Islamist movement at the conference. This drive to make AST a recognized unitary player on the national scene was nonetheless counterbalanced by the centripetal tendencies of Salafi activism (Cavatorta 2015).

One noticeable area of friction within AST as much as between AST and other social and political players concerned the protean repertoire of contentious politics used by grassroots activists, and particularly the use of violence. The Salafis' emphasis on the Quranic notion of "commanding good and forbidding wrong" (*amr bil maruf wa nahi anil munkir*) was interpreted and implemented in many different ways by groups in their local context. Retrospectively, Salafi sympathizers often blamed the overzealous and misguided Salafi youths who were too quick to use violence to back up their religious message and gave a poor image of AST and of Salafi players generally (interview with former AST sympathizers, Douar Isher, October 2015). For AST, guilt by association became a growing nuisance in 2012 as other social and political players increasingly identified the movement as a serious competitor (Merone and Cavatorta 2013). The revolutionary mood that until then had supported the idea that everything could be changed in the country became negatively associated with AST; an organization that seemingly challenged all the things that most social and political players then wanted to remain stable. In this context, the negative "radical flank effect" which hindered the movement's acceptance by the wider public was not compensated by a positive radical flank effect in favor of the institutionalized Islamists of Ennahda.[1]

The violent demonstration that took place at the US embassy in Tunis in September 2012 gave another twist to these dynamics of grassroots violence poorly controlled by AST. Although AST and other Islamist organizations had called for a demonstration, its members constituted only a part of the crowd that participated, and the ransacking of the nearby American school was a coincidental event. Alongside AST members and sympathizers in recognizable Salafi attire, came youths sporting shorts and T-shirts from neighboring poor suburbs who engaged in looting once the protest became more violent (Mosaique FM 2012). As the protest went out of control, Tunisian security forces began using live ammunition against protesters in an ad hoc response to the turn of events. Secularized political players used this episode to ask the Ennahda-led government to ban AST and to step up its security response against Salafi activism. In the aftermath of this event, secular opposition actors publicly denounced AST as the main culprit

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1   For typical strategic dilemmas in situations of nonviolent resistance, see Chenoweth and Stephan 2011.

behind the violence, and singled out Abou Ayadh as the man responsible (Mandraud 2012). Chased by the police, the AST founder went underground in Tunisia before crossing over to Libya and associating himself with Ansar al-Sharia in Libya.

At about the same time, the negotiations between Ennahda and the secularized opposition over the role of Sharia in the new Tunisian constitution had marginalized the views proposed by the conservative faction of Ennahda, which were closest to the Salafi viewpoint, and which had lobbied to make Sharia central to the new Tunisian constitution. Despite recognizing the popular appeal of AST at a grassroots level, the Ennahda leadership had decided that reaching a compromise with pro-secular forces was a priority to stabilize the political system. Salafi criticism mounted over the months, as grassroots Salafi players increasingly opposed pro-Ennahda and pro-government players (Marks 2013). AST and other Salafi activists strategically targeted controversial cultural events and initiatives as well as contentious economic activities such the sale of alcohol in order to position themselves as the defenders of true Islamic identity. These confrontations were underpinned by a growing disappointment with the policies of Ennhada among grassroots Salafis, as well as by a desire to reshape their own social world in a context where the earlier consensus about the identity of the state and of Tunisian society had weakened (interview with former Salafi activists, Douar Hisher, November 2015).

Social and political empowerment was a mobilizing factor particularly for the "revolutionary youth" who were seeking to improve their condition and society through direct action as they did in the heyday of the uprising. Many grassroots activists of all ideological orientations who had become empowered at the beginning of the transitional period through "neighborhood committees," "revolutionary leagues," and so on, sought to entrench their position (Allal 2011). As institutionalized politics and governance slowly came back to play a main role in their everyday life, the ad hoc, extra-institutional power of these activists began to decrease significantly. Once in government the Ennahda party in particular was quite effective at co-opting many of these local players into its network of governance (Volpi, Merone, and Loschi 2016). Islamic-minded players unsatisfied with the terms of the new deal proposed by the Ennahda-led government found in the AST an outlet for contesting the new forms of administrative control of society.

A second set of strategic interactions were more directly shaped by the religious identity of AST and its Salafi discourse. The grassroots activists' newly affirmed views about the position of women in society, the scope of

Sharia in regulating social interactions, etc., clashed with those of other social actors in everyday practices (Cavatorta 2015; Donker 2013). In this context, dissatisfied by the liberal discourse of Ennahda, Salafi players questioned the ability of the party to position Islam centrally in the new state system and to help re-Islamicize society. They used those social spaces that they had continued to build in the aftermath of the uprisings (mosques, poorer neighborhoods) as a springboard to challenge locally the authority of the new democratic government and the legitimacy of the state. Salafi sympathizers, particularly among the unemployed youth, repeatedly underpinned this identity-based discourse with an account of the socioeconomic hardship faced by the population linking socioeconomic failure to a lack of proper Islamic governance (interview with former Salafi activists, Douar Hisher, October 2015).

AST as an Arena of Contention and Post-AST Salafi Trajectories

AST failed to entrench a collective identity derived from revolutionary practices and to turn itself into an institutionalized movement in the face of a reemerging state during the period of democratic normalization of the Tunisian model (2013-2014). Strategic competition among AST players and between them and pro-state players became at this juncture the principal causal factor behind the implosion of the movement. The September 2012 attack against the US embassy had illustrated the difficulties of AST to speak with a single voice. Subsequently, the flight of one of its main leaders accentuated the tendency of AST to function as a multicephalous organization. In addition, frictions among different AST currents increased sharply, alongside the frictions between them and state and secular players, after another act of political violence at the start of the year. On February 6, 2013, Salafi-jihadi players loosely connected to AST assassinated leftist opposition parliamentarian Chokri Belaid. By openly using political assassinations to support their views, these players redrew the boundaries of the arena of contestation between AST and other political players, as well as undermined the fragile consensus inside AST. Inside the movement, this assassination exacerbated the ideological and tactical differences between different currents within AST ahead of the third annual conference of the movement. Those Salafi-jihadis advocating armed jihad saw Belaid as an apostate due to his secularist positions, and thus as someone whom it could be legitimate to kill in the circumstances. The (larger) Salafi current following the initial model proposed by Abou Ayadh saw the country as a Muslim

land in which they could wage the jihad by the tongue (proselytism) and so there was no case for waging jihad by the sword (Merone and Cavatorta 2013; International Crisis Group 2013b).

Domestically, the political violence of the armed jihadi players undermined the strategies of the more pragmatic AST players who did not want to engage in a frontal confrontation with the state and secularized social movements. In the aftermath of the assassination, the secularized opposition parties and civil society organizations such as the UGTT which had been criticizing the leniency of the Ennahda-led government toward Salafi players, stepped up their criticism of the lax security policies of the government to woo public opinion. To reaffirm the authority of the state and its own national legitimacy, Ennahda progressively changed its strategic positioning toward AST from a policy of informal accommodation to one of formal confrontation. This change, tentatively enacted through the arrest warrant for Abou Ayadh, took a new dimension in May 2013 when the interior minister banned the third national conference of AST about to take place in Kairouan (Blaise 2013).

As soon as the AST conference was banned, grassroots AST activists and sympathizers battled the police in several suburbs of Tunis and several other towns. At the same time, senior figures of the movement discursively hyped their opposition to the government and the state institutions (Weslaty 2013). The decision of the Tunisian government to be less lenient toward the transgressions of AST pushed further away the possibility of legalization and institutionalization of the movement, as illustrated by the behavior and discourse of the Salafi players at the time. Even retrospectively in the light of the failure of AST, grassroots Salafi sympathizers did not usually estimate that the organization had missed an opportunity by failing to turn itself into a formal political organization. They would argue that it was precisely because it was not a mere political party that AST was attractive to people dissatisfied with the post-authoritarian political system (interview with former AST sympathizers, Douar Hisher, October 2015). At the elite level, the lack of clear consensus regarding the direction of the organization became particularly damaging in July 2013 when armed jihadis assassinated a second leftist parliamentarian, Mohamed Brahmi, and rekindled the political debates about national security and the need for a complete ban on AST activities.

Ultimately, the relationship between AST and the Ennahda-led government fundamentally changed in August 2013. In an effort to reassert the control of the government over security affairs in the face of increased opposition from secularized political players, the interior minister announced

that AST would be classified a terrorist organization. This institutional shift from toleration to repression of AST had several important consequences not only for AST itself but also for Salafi mobilization in the country (Cavatorta 2015). As AST was declared a terrorist entity by the state, its appeal and usefulness as an umbrella organization for Salafi players across the country fell sharply. Until then AST had benefited from the mimetic quality of grassroots Salafi mobilization to position itself as the leading voice of Salafism in Tunisia. Grassroots Salafi players, be they AST members or not, had benefited in their turn from the national and international exposure of AST in their endeavors to "re-Islamicize" their neighborhood. After the ban on AST, as the police increasingly arrested AST leaders and members, many Salafi sympathizers began to take their distance from the organization. Their mimetic relation with AST turned from being a strategic advantage to being a practical liability. As the security policies of the state became more effective over the months, Salafi activism began to decrease tangibly, particularly in those public arenas of contestation where they used to be highly visible (mosques, poorer suburbs, etc.).

Increasingly, state authorities regained control of public spaces that had been shaped by Salafi activists since the uprisings. The police cleared up the public squares where Salafis organized their activities, clamped down on street patrolling by activists, and evicted groups from the mosques which they had appropriated for themselves. In this context, purported association with AST became a ready-made justification for arresting and imprisoning Salafi players. Anwar Aouled, the lawyer heading the families of prisoners' association Marsad, indicated that the reported increase in police practices inherited from the old regime, such as torturing suspects, was particularly noticeable against alleged Salafis. He noted that particularly after the 2015 terrorist attacks in Tunis (March) and Sousse (June), the justice system was reluctant to oppose the police on issues presented as cases of "terrorism" (interview with Anwar Aouled, Tunis, October 2015). Since 2014, the increased state repression against Salafi players had induced a process of demobilization particularly in the poorer suburbs among the youth. In this more repressive context, grassroots Salafi sympathizers not only took their distance from AST, but also adopted more low-profile activities to avoid attracting the attention of the police. In particular, local players reverted to low-key practices through family and friends' networks with limited national or transnational connections (interview with Salafi activists, Douar Hisher, November 2015).

State security policies targeting the "terrorist" activities of AST paved the way in 2014 and 2015 for the shrinkage of the arenas of religious contestation

through a stricter state control of the mosque networks. The Ministry of Religious Affairs appointed new state-vetted imams to the mosques that had been controlled by Salafi players after the uprisings as the police progressively evicted Salafi imams. This process began under the technocratic government of Jomaa in 2014 and accelerated under the government of Essebsi in 2015 when former cadres of the old regime reintegrated the ruling circles. The appointment of Othman Battikh, Grand Mufti under Ben Ali, as minister for religious affairs in February 2015 illustrated well this shift in state personnel and practices. In this new and more repressive arena of contestation, Salafi players not directly associated with AST repositioned themselves as legal civil society associations, including workers' unions as in Sfax, in order to be able to continue some of their activities (interview with Salafi activists, Tunis, October 2015). In this way, they were able to reshape to some extent the arenas of religious contestation and partially to counter the strategic expansion of state players in the religious domain. These new and more legalistic practices of contestation, especially when backed by substantial grassroots support, have proved to be quite effective, as with the pressure of the Sfax mosque network (and union) which contributed to the removal of the minister for religious affairs at the start of 2016 (Larbi 2015).

This new style of activism was evident in Tunis in October 2015 during the well-organized demonstration in front of the Ministry of Religious Affairs by associations from Sfax contesting the replacement of imams in their town. Well-behaved protestors, mostly wearing Western-style clothing, adopted a "sit-in" strategy to block the entrance to the ministry, while the organizers broadcasted their demands and critiques of the minister. After a few hours, the protest ended peacefully, with demonstrators singing the national anthem before disbanding. As participants and organizers were keen to stress during this protest event in Tunis, they were contesting the policies of the government mainly through court actions. Protest events like this sit-in in front of the ministry were designed to attract public attention to those cases where official policies appeared not to be in full compliance of the law – such as the administrative eviction of imams before a judicial ruling is obtained (interview with activists from Sfax, Tunis, October 2015). These more legalistic strategies deployed in the face of the "anti-terrorist" discourses and tactics of the police and the government constituted a noticeable shift from the strategies of ad hoc mobilization and street violence once used by AST and other Salafi groups from 2011 to 2013.[2] Salafi-leaning

2   There were nonetheless more confrontational episodes of street mobilization in the Sfax area in the second half of 2015 pitting the police against and Salafi-leaning players.

organizations have become more formal civil society associations and have engaged more directly with the legal framework devised by the state to structure contestation. These were not strategies that AST was commonly and explicitly endorsing when it was allowed to operate in the country, as its use of "revolutionary" discourse and practice kept putting in question the very legitimacy of the state system.

At the same time as these legalistic approaches developed, an older repertoire of contention also became more central in the aftermath of AST demise. Salafi-jihadi players advocating armed resistance against the state began to be more active in the country, while transnational jihadi networks directed prospective fighters toward external military theaters (Libya, Syria). Okba Ibn Nafaa, the Tunisian subsidiary of the Algerian-led AQIM began to conduct regular guerilla operations against the Tunisian security forces in the Chambi Mountains, near the Algerian border, from the summer of 2013 onwards (International Crisis Group 2013a). Salafi activists located near the Libyan border have also crossed over to join Ansar al-Sharia Libya as the prospects for AST became bleaker in Tunisia (interview with former AST sympathizer, Tataouine, October 2014). Further afield, the jihadi groups operating in the Syrian theater have also witnessed an influx of fighters of Tunisian origin. By turning to these very specific repertoires of contention, many Salafi players strategically dropped the Tunisian-centric approach of AST and reframed their activism within the wider regional arena of contention structured by transnational jihadi networks. The breakdown of a domestic arena of Salafi contention shaped by AST and its advocacy of nonviolent jihad in Tunisia de facto reinforced a Salafi identity little concerned with national boundaries. In this perspective, the strategic deadly violence of (Islamic State-linked) armed jihadis, such as the killings of foreign tourists in Tunis and in Sousse in March and June 2015 became another main alternative to the societal project of AST.

The mobilization of the revolutionary youth that underpinned the growth of AST from 2011 to 2013 did not produce the kind of structured organization that the established Salafi players who had launched the movement had hoped for. The leadership of AST failed to secure the place of the movement after the revolution via more symbolic and politically ritualistic forms of contention expressed through political party activism and voting, as some in the Ennahda movement had hoped for. The electoral scores of Ennahda in the October 2014 parliamentary elections indicated that, among other things, the Salafi youth who had previously mobilized behind AST did not turn to supporting Ennahda once AST was banned. The strategic choice of Ennahda to ban AST in August 2013 so damaged the relationship between

these two Islamic-minded publics that Salafi sympathizers would be loath to consider supporting Ennahda subsequently – even though some admitted that they voted for them in the first parliamentary elections of 2011 (interview with Salafi sympathizers, Douar Hisher, October 2015). In practice, the breakup of AST redirected mobilization in two main directions, as well as generating a demobilization of Salafi players across the board. On the one hand determined activists turned to those older repertoires of violent political contestation advocated by transnational Salafi-jihadi networks, which are designed to cope with authoritarian arenas of contestation. On the other hand, mobilization became less politicized and more legalistic as Salafi-leaning players sought to reframe their goals and identity in order to operate within a public arena of contestation whose rules are defined primarily by state players.

Conclusion

The rise and fall of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia in the aftermath of the 2011 Tunisian uprising is tightly linked to the quasi-dual nature of this Salafi movement. AST's eventual failure as a unitary player of the democratizing Tunisian social and political scene is a direct consequence of its strategic confrontation with other Islamist and secularized players seeking to impose a new identity on the Tunisian state and society. The roots of this fateful confrontation however can be traced back to AST itself but this time as an arena of contestation in which Islamist, Salafi, and grassroots players competed between themselves to shape the identity and practices of the movement.

Institutionalist accounts of regime change in Tunisia commonly frame the rise and fall of AST and of Salafi players more generally in a fairly standard explanation of the political opportunity structure. From that angle, it is mainly a case of previously repressed Salafi activists seizing the opportunity created by the collapse of the existing authoritarian system to impose their views and practices in society, until such time as the post-revolutionary state was able to reimpose its own normative and material order. However, while the opening and closing institutional framework was important to explain the rise and decline of the AST, it did not explain its specific forms and dynamics of mobilization.

Post festum it is easy to overlook the grassroots dynamics of mobilization/demobilization and thus to exaggerate the unitary nature of AST. Although the Islamist arena was already complex under authoritarianism, when

the opening came, the ways in which the mobilization happened are not directly explained by the opportunity structures. The structural opening and closing are the context, but they do not explain anything beyond that. In particular they do not directly help us understand what that mobilization and later repression actually means for the Salafi trend. In effect throughout the period of formal existence of AST, grassroots mobilization as Salafi mobilization was contingent, and the relation between Salafi and other players at the national level was always evolving.

The failure of AST to create a critical juncture for the implementation of a Salafi project in Tunisia is a principal outcome of these dynamics of grassroots mobilization, identity construction, and state reinstitutionalization. The forms of mobilization of grassroots players behind AST, be it explicit or via mimetic association, at different junctures of the Tunisian transition illustrated the aspirational nature of the movement and the autonomy of the base. The AST logo often masked microstrategies of social mobility, ad hoc responses to local dynamics, personal rediscoveries of the religious, etc. that curtailed the ability of the leadership to forge a stable identity for the movement and to direct the behaviors of players who have associated themselves (or have been associated) to AST. These dynamics of grassroots mobilization generated self-limiting strategic options for AST as a national player that could institutionalize Salafi practices, ideas and leadership, in the face of the competition generated by state, Islamist and secularized players.

It may well be that today, with the benefit of insight, scholars of the region may voice long-held doubts such as: "Did the Salafists really have a chance in a country like Tunisia?" They may also point to the continuing importance of institutionalized players like the UGTT in social and political life as evidence of longer-term structural trends in the evolution of the Tunisian polity. Once again, the benefit of insight may be deceptive. "Old" players too were challenged by regime change. The continuing political relevance of the UGTT is not a given but the result of internal policy and personnel changes and external repositioning at the time of the revolution to present itself convincingly to the population as a much-needed organization of the post-Ben Ali period. Despite its initial organizational advantage, it too could have become redundant had it not reinvented itself successfully. AST too, despite its initial organizational disadvantage, was able to present itself as a much-needed player of the post-Ben Ali era to a growing number of dissatisfied Tunisians in the early transitional period. It is its internal policing and its external relations failures that thwarted the movement's effort to remain a relevant organization and that made "Salafism" a failing identity marker of the new Tunisian political system. In both cases, initial

conditions only provided a set of identities and resources with which to work, they did not predetermine the outcome – if they did, Ben Ali would still be sitting in his Carthage palace.

Acknowledgements

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4   Contingency and Agency in a Turning Point Event

March 18, 2011, in Daraa, Syria

Wendy Pearlman

Abstract

Based on open-ended interviews with Syrian refugees in Jordan and Turkey, this analysis of Syria's first mass street demonstration, occurring on March 18, 2011, in the city of Daraa, seeks to make three contributions to understanding revolts. First, in illustrating how decisions or their intended outcomes might have been disrupted, it calls attention to the contingency shaping when, where, and how uprisings begin. Second, it shows how detailed study of actions and interactions at a specific juncture in time and place allows us to examine the relative weight of both premeditation and spontaneity in the development of protest. Third, scrutiny of participants' understandings of their concrete choices can help reveal the microfoundations of macropolitical phenomena, shedding the light on the roles of instrumental rationality, values, and emotions in guiding behavior.

Keywords: Syria, contingency, agency protest, revolution, critical events

"In a revolution, as in a novel," Alexis de Tocqueville famously wrote, "the most difficult part to invent is the end." This quip finds vindication in the Arab world today, where changes put in motion by the 2011 uprisings continue to surprise and confound observers. Nowhere is this more dramatic than in the civil war raging in Syria. Given the astonishing devastation in the country, it can be easy to forget that the initiation of peaceful protest

also astonished observers at the time. We still have much to learn about how demonstrations began and launched a revolt.

Many approaches in social movement theory elucidate the structural sources of grievance that motivate people to challenge authority, as well as the role of networks and framing in facilitating mobilization. However, they leave us to wonder how these factors come together with particular decisions, in time and place, in order to produce the first acts of protest and sustain them long enough to get an uprising off the ground. Probing such elements, this essay seeks to put such a single, critical contentious episode under the microscope. I do so through original interviews with participants in a demonstration on March 18, 2011, in the city of Daraa, the 100,000-person capital of a predominantly rural province of the same name. This was not Syrians' first action inspired by the "Arab Spring." However, it was the first street protest that was sustained sufficiently long to attract large numbers and generate a swelling procession over space. Ending in the revolution's first fatalities, it propelled daily demonstrations in the Daraa region and hastened nationwide demonstrations after one week's time. It is thus widely regarded as one of the key "sparks" lighting the national rebellion against Bashar al-Assad (McEvers 2012; Sterling 2012).

In unpacking how this spark itself became lit, I do not wish to imply that, had it not occurred, there would not have been a revolution in Syria. The very occurrence of revolt did not hinge on this particular day in Daraa. Nonetheless, this event is analytically important because it offers a window into the challenges and uncertainty that inhibit protest in repressive circumstances, especially during an early phase in which protest remains extremely rare. Scrutiny of how such moments transform from pre-revolutionary periods to revolutionary junctures can thus lay bare the processes through which would-be protestors overcome constraints in order to get mass mobilization off the ground.

Cascade models of collective action deduce the abstract processes by which a few early risers in protest present new information that leads bystanders to update their calculations of the costs and benefits of dissent, thereby encouraging increasing numbers to participate until a bandwagon generates a critical mass (Granovetter 1978; Schelling 1978; Kuran 1991; Marwell and Oliver 1993). Empirical scrutiny of the start of an actual protest cascade, in context, reminds us of the contingencies shaping these dynamics. Particularly in settings in which the state is ready to quash opposition, first movers must manage to act where and when they can be seen by others. Second movers must decide to follow, even though the risks are significant, the prospects of making a difference are dim, and the still-small size of the

crowd ensures that they are unlikely to pay a reputational cost for remaining on the sidelines (Pearlman 2016). As an uprising grows, there can reach a point at which dissent is routinized and large crowds cease to be surprising. A return to the earliest moments can help analysts appreciate why the initial launch of dissent is often so surprising for participants themselves. It therefore encourages us to take seriously the contingency and complex motivations infusing individuals' decisions to rebel, even as we enumerate the larger structural causes of revolution.

In taking up this approach, this study stands to make at least three contributions to understanding revolts such as that in Syria and elsewhere. First, in illustrating how decisions or their intended outcomes might have been disrupted, such an investigation calls attention to the contingency shaping when, where, and how uprisings begin. This offers an important complement to explanations of the Arab revolts that privilege either background factors or large-scale processes such as transnational diffusion. Second, detailed study of actions and interactions at a specific juncture in time and place allows us to examine the relative weight of both premeditation and spontaneity in the development of protest. This is particularly puzzling under repressive regimes, where prohibitions make prior planning both more difficult and more necessary, lest an incipient challenge to authority be quashed before reaching fruition. Third, consideration of how individuals explain their choices can help us explore the microfoundations of macropolitical phenomena. While all social theory builds on assumptions about the bases of individual decision-making, empirical scrutiny of participants' understandings of their concrete choices brings us closer to identifying the actual roles of instrumental rationality, values, and emotions in guiding behavior.

These propositions come to the fore in the open-ended interviews that I conducted with Syrian refugees identified through snowball sampling during three and a half months of ethnographic fieldwork in Jordan (2012, 2013) and Turkey (2013), as a part of a larger project on oral histories of the Syrian revolt (Pearlman 2017). In this essay, I focus on the 58 testimonials that I collected from people from Daraa, and especially on the recollections of a much smaller number of individuals who participated in the March 18 protest. Open-ended interviews create space for people to provide information that researchers might not think to elicit in questionnaires, and thus can offer perspectives and local knowledge that go missing in official histories and universal theories (Patterson and Monroe 1998). Personal narratives, as sources that naturally put actors and action sequences at the forefront, offer particular leverage for tracing the agency driving development of an event in time.

Nevertheless, as a form of evidence, interviews must be analyzed with caution. Individuals' post hoc explanations of their actions can carry deliberate or inadvertent rationalizations or misrepresentations, harden into social scripts, or assert lofty motivations rather than admit to base ones. Testimonials relayed in the context of an ongoing conflict also might be colored by the attitudes, affects, and discursive terms reigning at that particular juncture during which they are gathered. Even when interviews accurately identify choices that were made in the context of protest, they do not themselves fully reveal the causal dynamics that led to those particular choices. These are important limitations, and any researcher using this kind of data must be vigilant in keeping them in mind. In my work, I have attempted to address the complexities of first-hand narratives by analyzing them with an ethnographic sensibility, in the sense of seeking to glean the meaning of behavior to the actors involved (Schatz 2009, 5) I have developed tools to do so through my general immersion in Syrian refugee communities, which built on years of living in the Middle East over the past two decades. In using interviews to create a chronicle of events in Daraa in March 2011, I have also sought to maximize the accuracy by cross-checking interviews both against each other and against journalistic and investigatory reports on the same events.

Given the much-discussed failure of experts to predict the Arab uprisings (Gause 2011; Bellin 2014), some scholars now call for research that focuses less on retroactive explanation than on understanding the variability in human decision-making that these revolts bring to light (Goodwin 2011; Kurzman 2012). Following their lead, this chapter does not seek to test hypotheses about why the Syrian uprising began where and when it did. Nor does it make the claim that this event in Daraa explains the Syrian uprising. Rather, my more modest aim is to explore what detailed examination of the inception of popular protest can reveal about the motivations, decisions, interactions, and contingencies that shape larger shifts in collective dissent. Meticulous qualitative investigation of the initial steps of a revolution sheds light on the agential dimension of the strategy that structural causes can often obscure. A handful of day-by-day analyses of the Egyptian uprising demonstrate the value of such an approach in that case (El-Ghobashy 2011; Holmes 2012). Yet no such academic research exists on the Syrian revolt, or goes into even more depth to disaggregate the sequences of actions and interactions constituting a single critical day. With this aim, this essay proceeds in three parts. It begins with a review of relevant literature on both social movements in general and the Syrian uprising in particular. It then uses original interviews with Syrian oppositionists, corroborated by

a range of published written, audio, and video sources, to craft a detailed narrative of the lead up to and unfolding of the March 18 protest in Daraa. It concludes with a discussion of what this analysis indicates about the roles of contingency, planning, spontaneity, and a range of individual motives in shaping the launch of an uprising.

The Value of Scrutinizing Particular Events

A leading approach in social movement theory holds that collective challenges to authority emerge when broad socioeconomic developments expand the structure of political opportunities by unsettling existing power relations and/or increasing the leverage of marginalized populations (McAdam 1982). Excluded groups mobilize by using preexisting organizations and networks to recruit members and appropriating elements of culture and ideas to frame their visions in ways that animate support (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996).

The large body of theory and empirical analysis developing these propositions has shed invaluable light on the broad conditions under which, and processes through which, grievance is transformed into action. However, questions remain about the dynamic motivations and behaviors of the real individuals who decide to protest, especially when risk runs high. Any understanding of social phenomena such as collective dissent is incomplete without understanding of such micro-level decision-making. As Daniel Little (1998, 203) writes, "The mechanisms through which social causation is mediated turn on the structured circumstances of choice of intentional agents and nothing else." Timur Kuran (1991, 16) agrees: "A mass uprising results from multitudes of individual choices to participate in a movement for change. There is no actor named 'the crowd.'"

Analytical scrutiny of a particular protest event can bring to light these circumstances and choices. Analysis of sequences of actions, and their immediate effect on other actions, offers a window onto the confluences of contextual conditions and internal compulsions that produce the behaviors which, in turn, combine into collectively transformative events. This is valuable not only for crafting a dynamic vision of contentious processes, but also for building explanatory arguments. After all, every choice, as a moment or situation in which individuals or groups pursue one flow of action when they might have pursed another (Jasper 2004), carries a counterfactual. Pinpointed study of specific protest episodes pushes us to think about why people did what they did, how external factors did or did

not facilitate their realization of their intended aim, and how aggregate consequences might have differed had those factors been otherwise.

Empirical scrutiny of micro- and local-level processes at a specific juncture in space and time can make three particular contributions to understanding contentious processes such as those seen in the Middle East in 2011. First, it encourages us to appreciate the contingency inherent in revolts. Many explanations of the Arab uprisings focus on the broad political, economic, and socio-demographic trends that gradually intensified discontent and undermined regimes' robustness (See, inter alia, Richards et al. 2013). Others explore the availability of new technologies for communicating information and organizing opposition (Lynch 2012), or the transnational diffusion processes that spread revolt across the region (Weyland 2012; Patel, Bunce, and Wolchik 2014). Scholars highlighting these elements aiding revolt are well aware of other factors, namely foreboding security apparatuses, that thwarted individuals' willingness to act, threatened to sabotage protest planning, or served to suppress protests before they gained momentum. Ultimately, the revolts were made not only by facilitating conditions, but also by individuals who managed to circumvent potential disruptions due to their determination to protest despite risk and their reasoning about the most effective ways to do so. Study of their localized decisions and behaviors, in space and time, can identify the consequential contingency that infused them.

Second, analysis of a particular event pinpoints the relative roles of prior planning and spontaneity in the development of protest. David Snow and Dana Moss (2014, 1123) define spontaneity as "events, happenings, and lines of action [...] which were not planned, intended, prearranged, or organized in advance of their occurrence." They name several factors increasing the likelihood of spontaneous action, one of which is conditions of ambiguity, in the sense that the "scripts" that normally guide protest and police-protestor encounters break down or dissolve, or nonscripted square-offs occur. These arguments, crafted largely in reference to the standardization of "public order management systems" in the West, need to be modified for authoritarian environments. In Syria, reigning scripts dictated quiescence to the cult of personality around the president and did not permit public protest (Wedeen 1999). When oppositionists dared to protest nonetheless, they plunged into conditions that were unprecedented and unknowable. On the one hand, this extreme ambiguity forced protestors to draw up scripts anew, which heightened the salience of spontaneous action. On the other, given security forces' strict regulation of any group assembly and their readiness to quash all dissent, oppositionists could

not depend on spontaneity alone. Without careful planning about timing, location, and tactics, a protest event was unlikely to get off the ground, much less be sustained long enough to attract a crowd. Deductive logic thus suggests that the onset of an uprising in such a setting would involve both planning and spontaneity. Only collection and analysis of evidence about actors' motivations, decisions, and behaviors, however, can reveal how those elements actually interacted or coexisted, in what sequences, and with what consequences.

Third, scrutiny of agency during the onset of what would become a historic transformation offers a window into the microfoundations of macropolitical phenomena. All social explanations build on assumptions about the underlying bases of individual decision-making. Research on choices in real protest events offers evidence about those bases, and can thereby help us adjudicate among three competing analytical approaches to understanding them. Theories that conceptualize individuals as utility-maximizers hold that self-interested agents obtain information, form beliefs, and then choose the most beneficial course of action (Elster 1999, 285). Alternatively, explanations that see individuals as driven by intrinsic values, identities, and principles suggest that people seek to fulfill human needs for dignity, integrity, and self-respect, sometimes irrespective of utility for achieving external aims (Deci 1975; Varshney 2003). Finally, another trend in scholarship insists that individual decision-making is also shaped by emotions: noninstrumental, subjective, evaluative experiences, which are evoked by external or mental events and carry both physiological changes and action tendencies (Frijda 1986, 4). All of these dimensions, and perhaps others, affect behavior (Etzioni 1986; Shamir 1990). Nonetheless, more research is needed to elucidate how they combine in protest situations such as those in the Arab uprisings and the conditions under which any one is likely to be especially salient (Pearlman 2013).

These points about protest dynamics apply to the Syrian case. Experts agree that a revolution in Syria was anything but guaranteed, yet typically locate that uncertainty in contradictory pushes and pulls at the macro level. After four decades of authoritarianism, Syrians longed for greater freedom, rule of law, economic opportunity, protection from an unchecked security apparatus, and an end to endemic corruption (George 2003; Yazbek 2011; Ziadeh 2011; Starr 2012; Wieland 2012). Assuming the presidency after his father's death in the year 2000, Bashar al-Assad oversaw neoliberal restructuring that heightened the conspicuous luxury for a collusive elite while cutting subsidies and services that further worsened living conditions among the bulk of the population (Aboud 2013). Mismanaged government

responses to drought exacerbated discontent, particularly among a rural population that had once benefited from the regime (International Crisis Group 2011; Hinnebusch and Zintl 2014).

While these factors suggested Syrians' readiness to join fellow Arabs elsewhere in demanding political change, other factors predicted the opposite. Indeed, as protest swept other countries in the Middle East, many analysts and Syrians themselves judged Syria to be a "kingdom of silence" immune from the regional tide (Abdulhamid 2011; Bröning 2011; Ismail 2011, 540). Compared to other countries that saw uprisings, Syria's single-party police state was more repressive, its military more infused with the regime, and its civil society more severely curtailed. Whereas Tunisia and Egypt saw most of society alienated from the government, Syria was an ethnic mosaic in which many members of minority sects supported the president, who comes from the minority Alawite sect. Beyond this, the regime enjoyed assets such as a popular foreign policy, the legacy of a welfare state, and generally high regard for a youthful head of state (International Crisis Group 2011; Hinnebusch and Zintl 2014). The same market reforms that accentuated sentiments of relative deprivation among the masses solidified the loyalty of crony capitalists (Haddad 2012) and led many in the affluent and middle classes to associate their aspirations for consumer comfort with continuation of the Assad regime (Wedeen 2013).

This general picture explains doubts surrounding the possibility of a rebellion in Syria, but attributes them to the precarious balance of forces favoring or disfavoring the Assad regime. Examination of localized decisions and actions can reveal how this uncertainty at the macro level unfolded at the microlevel, where individuals' will to rebel was met by their fear of repression and the presence of a strong security apparatus encountered the strategic maneuvers of oppositionists to avert it. These issues come to light in a number of studies that examine the dynamics of protest more specifically. Some works consider the mix of opportunities and threats that motivated protestors (Leenders and Heydemann 2012) or the escalatory effects of repression (Droz-Vincent 2014). In several pieces, Reinoud Leenders researches Daraa as I do here, and asks how and why this particular community managed to initiate what became a nationwide revolt. Leenders (2012, 2013b) attributes much of Daraa's first mover role to its dense social networks organized around clans and cross-border movements for migration or smuggling. These networks generated solidarity, aided recruitment, facilitated framing of themes and slogans, and helped translate perceived opportunities into effective and sustained collective

action. Using the "hidden transcripts" of dissenting views that circulated within these networks, people in Daraa produced framing strategies that not only motivated protest, but also were forms of protest in themselves (Leenders 2013a).

Throughout this important work on the identifiable factors that increased the potential for protest, Leenders and others also discuss how the actual occurrence of protest is infused with elements of contingency, unpredictability, and agency. They insist that opportunities are not given, but perceived and created by people who circumvent constraints, innovate strategy, and ultimately face risk (also see Kurzman 1996, 2004). Detailed descriptive analysis of a specific event can help us identify and trace the decisions and actions that make this possible. Original interviews with those who participated in or witnessed the first mass street protest in Daraa allow us to dissect that turning point into the many micro-turning points that comprised it, and thereby advance this understanding in the Syrian case.

The Making of a Critical Protest Event in Syria

Rebellions in Tunisia and Egypt demonstrated to people all over the Middle East that what was once largely taken as an inexorable truth – that the region's citizens would not rise up against their governments – was a contingent condition susceptible to change. Though most Syrians remained too afraid to articulate dissent, this newly ambiguous context emboldened some who harbored hope for reform. Observers thus noted some citizens refusing to supply bribes to officials as usual. Others began broaching political topics in conversation, on the internet, and in unprecedented appearances of anti-regime graffiti (International Crisis Group 2011, 8-10). A man from Daraa described how people there started to push boundaries in increasingly marked ways:

> The forced resignation of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia was like a fantasy. It was a dream. I was one of the people in Syria who had tears in his eyes [...] We wondered: could a revolution happen in another country, too? Most people thought it was impossible.
> Tunisia did not have as big a psychological impact as Egypt did. The Egyptian Revolution was only eighteen days. But there were some guys who didn't sleep at night. They followed the news nonstop. All day long: Egypt, Egypt, Egypt.

When it was announced that Mubarak had resigned [...] Wow, I remember
that day [...] People in Syria were very happy inside. The state did not
want to make any conflicts in the street. So people went outside, and
they walked around and they started to talk. They talked about Egypt
and Mubarak and said "Grace be to God." They did not talk about Bashar.
But they knew inside. Inside them, they wanted their own revolution,
too. Outwardly, they just talked about Egypt. Inside they were moved,
and had thoughts [...]
Then Syrians who had migrated abroad began to write a lot [on the
internet]. They wrote on the Syrian revolution pages about the regime's
crimes [...] And then there began other revolutions, in Yemen and Libya,
for example, and in Egypt it ended. And the push became even bigger
for something to happen in Syria. (Interview with T.A., Amman, Jordan,
September 16, 2012)

Around this time, a female doctor from a well-connected Daraa family
was detained after a phone conversation in which she reportedly said, in
a reference to the uprisings occurring elsewhere in the Middle East, "Let it
happen to us, too" (Leenders 2012, 420-421). About ten days later, on March
6, anti-regime graffiti appeared on the wall of a local school. Security forces
came to the school and arrested some 15 children, apparently arbitrarily.
Journalistic investigations reported that intelligence agents stormed houses
and made more arrests for several days thereafter (McEvers 2012; Fahim and
Saad 2013).

Elders from the families of the detained children appealed for their
release by making a formal visit to local officials, including the provincial
chief of political security, Atef Najeeb, a cousin of Bashar al-Assad with
a history of corruption (Sands, Vela, and Maayeh 2014). Najeeb's abuse of
power was predictable given his position in a political economy unchecked
by rule of law. The particular provocativeness of his response to the relatives
of the arrested children, however, was contingent. When they pleaded for
their release, the security chief reportedly dismissed them, saying: "Forget
your children. Go home to your wives and make more children. And if you
do not know how, bring your wives and we will show you" (Macleod 2011;
McEvers 2012; Sterling 2012).

The impact of these words, whether they were actually spoken as such
or persisted as legend, cannot be underestimated. Nearly every person
whom I met from Daraa could quote them verbatim. "Everyone in Daraa
knows each other," a man explained. "So everyone found out. And people
were really angry when they learned what had happened" (interview with

A. Sh., Ramtha, Jordan, October 6, 2012). His wife elaborated: "We felt like those kids were our kids. And those women [whom Najeeb insulted] were just like us" (interview with U. Sh., Ramtha, Jordan, October 6, 2012). These references to dense social ties speak to the importance of the structure of social networks. Yet they also speak to what McAdam (2003, 297) refers to as the contingent factors that operate within networks and serve to animate network-based processes. In this case, networks enabled the flow of information, but the impact of that information on people lay in the values and emotions of indignation and empathy that they triggered.

While this "moral shock" reverberated in Daraa, citizens elsewhere in Syria were responding to other impetuses. A spontaneous demonstration erupted in Damascus's commercial market when a police officer slighted a merchant and a large crowd gathered to support him in an "unprecedented" show of defiance (Abbas 2011, 1; International Crisis Group 2011, 9). Syrians held a handful of vigils in support of other Arab revolts. These grew in size from an early sit-in of about 15 people in solidarity with Egypt (Human Rights Watch 2011a) to a later gathering of some 200 outside the Libyan embassy (Williams 2011). Each protest was violently dispersed when security forces beat protestors. In early February, activists based outside Syria called for protests under the slogan "Day of Rage," but they lacked connections to citizens in the country and nothing happened (Sands 2011).

The regime unbanned Facebook that month, and a new group rallied tens of thousands of supporters under the call for a revolution against Bashar al-Assad. When the group called for another "Day of Rage" for March 15, many more people were ready to participate. Various localities witnessed events, yet security personnel promptly dispersed the assemblies and arrested dozens (Abouzeid 2011). The following day, a peaceful demonstration outside the Interior Ministry calling for the detainees' release was again forcibly dispersed (Human Rights Watch 2011b). "The culture of protesting is not present here. They oppressed it until they killed it," an activist lamented (New York Times 2011).

Back in Daraa, politically minded citizens were also increasingly eager to protest. "There was strong hope for change," a young man then in his late teens recalled. "We, the youth, knew that if we did not rise up at this time, it would be impossible to rise up for another million years. We had to do something in Syria. We had to have demonstrations, even without prior planning" (interview with I. M., Irbid, Jordan, September 17, 2012). Others with more experience, including some of these young men's fathers and uncles active in leftist opposition groups, recognized a need to plan. A member of that older cohort explained:

> We consulted and communicated with each other. We were all people who were involved in political work. It would go something like this: I have some political awareness. I come to talk to you. You are convinced that we need to do something and you commit to bringing ten people who you trust. Then a second person does the same, and then a third. So there developed a circle, a group that had the capacity to do something. In the beginning, this circle reached about 50 or 60 people. (Interview with W.T., Irbid, Jordan, August 14, 2013)

These oppositionists, along with their sons and others, secretly circulated a plan to hold a demonstration in front of the central court building on the March 15 "Day of Rage." Would-be protestors took various precautions in anticipation of repression. Some sought to avoid attracting security forces' attention by traveling to the site individually rather than in groups. Others, eager to contain the impact of any crackdown, made calculated decisions about who should participate. "My brother went, but he did not let anyone else go," a young man explained. "That way, if just one person goes and gets arrested, only one person from the family is lost" (interview with C.J., Irbid, Jordan, August 25, 2013).

Careful premeditation notwithstanding, the demonstration's success was contingent on activists' ability to shield their plans from the knowledge of the intelligence services, informants, and their multiple means of surveillance. Such did not come to pass, as one attendee described:

> We'd spread the word very secretly, by word of mouth, person-to-person. One person would whisper the news to someone else; only those people he knew really well and trusted fully. Many people came, but the security forces were already there and ready. They quashed it before it even began. People came, saw the security forces, and left immediately. They didn't even stop. So there was no demonstration. We decided that we needed to try again. (Interview with L.M., Amman, Jordan, August 17, 2013)

A small group met that night and decided that their next attempt to organize protest should take place at the mosque that Friday, March 18. "Why Friday prayers?" a Daraa resident asked rhetorically. "Because, in Syria, it is prohibited for more than five people to assemble without prior security approval. So prayer inside the mosque is the only opportunity people have to gather" (interview with T.A., Amman, Jordan, September 16, 2012). The decision to hold a repeat demonstration at a mosque was one strategic choice. The next choice, of no less strategic significance, was *which* mosque. The city's

main religious institution, the Omari mosque, a symbol of pride and piety for the entire region, regularly attracted a large crowd of worshippers. For the same reason, it was sure to attract a large security force presence. As such, activists selected a smaller house or worship: the Hamza wa Abbas mosque, located in the Mahata neighborhood:

> Security forces watch mosques very closely. But we chose a mosque that had just newly been built, so security forces had not yet established any significant surveillance presence there [...]
> The same young people who were committed to protesting on March 15 came out on March 18. One of the young men was in charge of starting it. He eventually became a martyr, God rest his soul. He was told that after the prayer finished he was supposed to stand up and shout, *"Allahu Akbar*, God is Great!"* The idea was that just one man would start, and then the other young men who were with him would stand up and repeat [the chant] with him.
> The plan was that people would come out from Hamza wa Abbas, and a few people would also start chanting at Omari. Then crowds from both mosques would meet in a city square. The planning was very precise. We were living under this regime and knew not to leave any detail to chance. We had studied the matter carefully. We knew the surveillance situation. (Interview with W.T., Irbid, Jordan, August 14, 2013)

Adding to the security advantages of the mosque was the social density of the neighborhood in which it was located. "Everybody in Mahata knows everybody else," explained one of the activists, who lived in that area. "Most of the people are relatives. Relations are close and the houses are very close together" (interview with L.M., Amman, Jordan, August 17, 2013). These words again pointed to the importance of social networks. Yet they also suggested the diversity of mechanisms through which they aid mobilization: here the contribution of preexisting social ties to protest did not turn on recruitment as much as the protection it offered from regime infiltration. Apart from these benefits, selection of this particular part of town held other advantages that were more serendipitous: it was also the neighborhood in which the school with the graffiti incident was located, and some family members of the arrested children, already angry and primed to protest, would to be at that mosque for Friday prayers, as well (interview with D.L., Amman, Jordan, October 9, 2012).

March 18 arrived. A man not involved in the planning described how the event unfolded as hoped by its planners:

The Friday prayer ended. People greeted each other as is customary, saying *"Salam wa Alaykoom, Salam wa Alaykoom,* Peace be upon you." Then one person got up and said *"Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!"* He said it three times. Older people in the mosque started to run away! Can you imagine? They started running out of a door here and a door there. Two people started. And then another person and another person got up. They formed a small demonstration, of about just ten people and left from the mosque.

All of this happened in a short amount of time. They started chanting: "God, Syria, Freedom, and nothing more!" Under Bashar al-Assad, there was the chant, "God, Syria, Bashar, and nothing more!" So what did they do? They substituted the word freedom for Bashar.

People were watching from their windows and balconies. It was an amazing thing. In decades, people in Syria had never gone out into the streets unless to say, "Bashar al-Assad, forever!" or "Hafez al-Assad, forever!" But here was a demonstration not in support of the regime. And not with the permission of the regime. And asking for freedom. And there the barrier of fear began to break.

Some people didn't participate. Many people were just standing there and watching, afraid. But other people were really manly and brave. They got on other people's shoulders and were clapping and chanting. (Interview with T.A., Amman, Jordan, September 16, 2012)

While careful premeditation was crucial for getting the demonstration off the ground, planning ended with the idea that one man would begin chanting and the hope that others would follow. "The most important thing was that we started," the senior oppositionist explained. "But could anyone know or anticipate what was going to happen after that? The answer is no" (interview with W.T., Irbid, Jordan, August 14, 2013). The unscripted context of a street demonstration opened a larger role for spontaneous action, which took over where that of planning ended. Confronted with the unprecedented sight of a street demonstration, bystanders responded in ways they could not have predicted in advance. Some fled, some were immobilized, and some jumped in. While their choices might have been informed by strategic reasoning about the costs and benefits of protest, they were also moved by values and emotions. Some were inspired by the collective euphoria of the chanting and clapping, or felt the need to prove their masculinity and courage. Others could not overcome feelings of fear. Still others were caught between fear of repression and an inner compulsion to raise their voices.

In such highly ambiguous circumstances, bystanders negotiated confusing and contradictory impetuses. One man who saw the march as it passed by his home, and decided to join it, reflected:

> The walk from the Hamza wa Abbas Mosque to the Omari Mosque is maybe 30 minutes, if you're walking slowly. Our house is along the way. We saw people marching. And they were chanting, "We want our children! Reform! Freedom!" And people came out from their houses. We would be cowards if we didn't march with them. At the same time, we were afraid. You felt like you were standing against the unknown. It was very, very difficult. You knew that anything could happen. They could arrest you. They could kill you. They could kill your family. People were afraid, but at the same time, we knew that we needed to do something. (Interview with A.Sh., Ramtha, Jordan, October 6, 2012)

The demonstration reached Omari mosque, where many more joined the crowd. One of the younger activists explained that he was confident that most bystanders shared the basic frustrations that motivated the protest, but had not foreseen the degree to which they would act on them:

> We expected that people would sympathize with us, but we were surprised that it only took one minute for everyone to know what was going on when they saw us marching. People joined us and started chanting. People came from everywhere, from houses, streets from other mosques [...] And at that point, we lost control of the situation. We were not responsible any more. It became a public matter. (Interview with D.L., Amman, Jordan, October 9, 2012)

The march grew and, within an hour or two, a crowd of several hundred had gathered (Macleod 2011; YouTube 2011). It stopped at the edge of the valley that separated the demonstration from the section of town where governmental institutions were located and a security deployment had been called to the scene. Regime officials attempted to negotiate with the demonstrators and a security officer threatened to arrest protestors. When this failed to disperse the crowd, they then fired tear gas, water cannons, and bullets (YouTube 2011; Human Rights Watch 2011d). Two protestors, Hussam Ayash and Mahmoud Jawabra, were killed. A third, Ayham Al-Hariri, died of his wounds a few days later (Human Rights Watch 2011c).

Lethal violence shocked and outraged the crowd. "I believe that was the tipping point," one activist said. "After they witnessed the blood,

there was no going back" (interview with W.T., Irbid, Jordan, August 14, 2013). Another agreed. "At this time, a new stage of the Syrian revolution started," he reflected. "That night many people of Daraa might have gone home and tried to find another solution if the regime hadn't fired on the demonstrators and killed people" (interview with D.L., Amman, Jordan, October 9, 2012).

The next day, those who had been killed were laid to rest. Like Friday prayers, the funerals offered a rare permissible opportunity for large numbers to gather and voice political dissent. This funeral attracted a crowd several times the size of the prior day's demonstration, and it too joined in impassioned chants against the regime (BBC 2011). One attendee explained that, far from instilling fear that deterred participation, the lethal violence of the previous day appeared only to convince people to seize what might be a once-in-a-lifetime chance to mobilize a collective cry for change:

> We were afraid to go out. Then the chance came to us. We were not going to let it pass [...] If we lost it, does that mean we'd never be able to go out again? Also, we knew that if we went back, the regime would come and arrest all the young people who went out the first day. They'd all die in prison.
> So there was no backing out. We knew if we went back, everyone would die. They'll leave no one. So there was no choice. We entered a road with no return. (Interview with C.J., Irbid, Jordan, August 25, 2013)

Discussion and Conclusions

Though March 15 is typically regarded as the start of the Syrian rebellion against Bashar al-Assad, the events of March 18 in Daraa were no less crucial and transformative in the making of what became a nationwide mobilization. It is possible that, had events not unfolded as they did in Daraa, other events in other places might have served the same function in launching a revolution in Syria. The fact that these events did happen where and when they did, however, allows us to scrutinize that incident for clues about the agential dimensions of a revolution's launch. Study of this case offers us a chance to disentangle the mix of foreseeable conditions, social interactions, and individual motivations that, against a backdrop of structural causes, combined to shift a critical mass of persons from silence to voice.

Analysis of how this momentous shift was hastened in Syria reveals how the Daraa turning point was the product of myriad choices that were also turning points for those who made them and the community transformed by their consequences. My analysis of this event does not offer a comprehensive portrait of all the varied dynamics at play in shaping it; scrutiny from other perspectives, such as those emphasizing gender or socioeconomic class, might produce different kinds of insight. My focus on agency and contingency, however, has sought to make three contributions to understanding rebellions in Syria and elsewhere. First, examination of the specific decisions and actions entailed in a critical protest event reveals the contingency shaping each step of its development. Explanations of the Arab uprisings that focus on political and economic structures, technological advances, or transnational diffusion can create the impression that popular uprisings were inevitable. We ought not forget the real possibility that the initial will to rebel might have been stymied, quashed, or derailed. In Daraa, what if there had been no graffiti on the school or no arrest of the children? What if the police forces had not insulted their families or had released the children more promptly?[1] What if activists had gone forward with the March 15 demonstration outside the courthouse and all been arrested? What if the security apparatus, alerted by the week's earlier calls for "Day of Rage," had posted agents at the Hamza wa Abbas mosque that Friday and successfully deterred the demonstration or overwhelmed it before it attracted a bandwagon? What if the young man designated to begin chanting on March 18 had lost the courage to play that role, or too few people followed him? These and many other such questions call attention to the contingency that accompanied the first tentative events that helped spur a nationwide revolt. Attention to these elements captures the real uncertainty and hazards with which individuals coped as they undertook the risk of protest.

Second, careful disaggregation of a protest episode into a sequence of interactive decisions allows us to assess the roles of both prior intention and spontaneity in defining its course. The Syrian case affirms arguments that protest conditions that are ambiguous, as opposed to defined by "scripts" for permissible dissent, expand the role for consequential spontaneous action. Yet they also remind us that when this ambiguity is due to prohibition of dissent, spontaneous action alone is unlikely to be sufficient to transform an incipient initiative into large-scale collective action. Given pervasive state

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1   The children were released later that week, showing signs of torture. See Human Rights Watch 2011d; Sterling 2012; Fahim and Saad 2013.

surveillance, oppositionists in Daraa brought deliberate premeditation not only to the task of planning protest, but also to the challenge of planning about how to plan. They thus made carefully calculated choices about how and with whom to talk about a possible demonstration, and also about where and when to attempt a second demonstration when the first was foiled. Without such strategic preparation, learning, and adaptation, a protest might never have gotten off the ground. At the same time, protest would not have gotten very far off the ground without the spontaneous participation of a much larger number of citizens not privy to such preparations. It was their joining en masse that transformed an incipient initiative into collective action with revolutionary potential. This close reading of the March 18 protest does not aim to derive definitive conclusions about the sequencing, interaction, and relative salience of planning and spontaneity in uprisings against authoritarianism. However, it offers inductive insights of use for future research crafting and testing hypotheses about these dynamics.

Third, empirical scrutiny of agency brings to light the diverse bases on which individuals decide to participate in protest and how they do so. Evidence from Syria lends support to each of three main approaches to understanding the microfoundations of contentious collective action. Some citizens made choices based on strategic thinking about the rationality of protest. For example, one man judged that large numbers attended the funeral on March 19 on the calculation that they would be punished regardless of whether they participated and, if there was ever a time to push for political change, it was then. Others acted on values and identities, such as manliness, courage, or a sense of obligation to join a collectivist effort. Beyond utility and values, emotions also motivated action. Given acute awareness of the regime's capacity for repression, it is difficult to imagine that Syrians who protested did not experience some degree of fear. Some were pulled through that fear by the euphoric collective effervescence of street protest. Others were pushed past it by sheer indignation in the face of what they perceived as humiliating insults and, even more powerfully, illegitimate killings. This research on Daraa thus supports those scholars calling for pluralization of understandings of the microfoundations of contentious politics (Varshney 2003; Pearlman 2013). It encourages continued thinking about how different logics complement, supplement, or combine with each other to motivate high-risk political action.

Syria's first mass street demonstration in March 2011 was hence a product of both long-held grievances and contingent sparks, prior planning and spontaneous action, and complex motivations shaped by instrumentality, values, and emotions. The Assad regime responded to peaceful protests

with violence, oppositionists gradually took up arms, the regime escalated its reprisals, a range of external state and nonstate players intervened, and a full-fledged civil war engulfed the country. Analysis of the first stirrings of this conflict reminds us that what has evolved into unspeakable horror began with very localized acts of political acumen and hope. They also entailed sacrifice. Of the oppositionists whose words are excerpted here, one has since lost his life and one lost a limb. All have lost loved ones and struggle with the trauma of violence, forced migration, and watching their country tear itself apart. In this context, listening to their stories is not simply an invaluable source of academic knowledge about processes of social mobilization and political change. It is also a way to honor the human spirit that moves people to face risk to challenge injustice and call for freedom.

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5   It Takes Two (or More) to Tango

The Local Coproduction of the Alexandrian Revolutionary Moment

Youssef El Chazli[1]

Abstract
How did the Egyptian Revolution come about? By focusing on a particular set of interactions during one day, January 25, 2011, in Egypt's second city, Alexandria, this chapter uses a microanalytical approach to shed light on the highly interactive and volatile moments when a revolution starts. I argue that we cannot fully grasp what happened in Alexandria during the first sequence of the Egyptian revolution (what came to be known as the "18 days") if we only look at macrostructural aspects of protest at the national level. Building on a multiplicity of data (interviews, observations, digital traces, review of the press) gathered during fieldwork conducted between 2011 and 2016, this research is a contribution to the microsociology of revolutions.

Keywords: Alexandria, Egyptian revolution, contingency, micro, protest milieu

"It is as simple as that: Past events will always look less random than they were."
– Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Fooled by Randomness

Late December 2010, Fleming neighborhood (*Alexandria*). About 30 people are chatting joyfully in the new headquarters of the Democratic Front Party while waiting for a conference to start. In the previous weeks, the party's apartment has become a gathering spot for most activist groups in the city, regardless of their political orientation (leftists, liberals, moderate Islamists, and so on). The youths (most of those in attendance are less than 30 years old) are saluting each other fondly, joking around, and taking commemorative pictures. There is a clear familiarity in the atmosphere. Later on, two socialist activists are warmly welcomed as they arrive. They have both just gotten out of jail after being arrested on false charges concocted by the police, with whom they have a proverbial personal enmity. They are welcomed as heroes. Indeed, their arrest had quickly become a focal point for rallying all the Alexandrian groups. The two recently released activists, and two others (a liberal and a socialist), give a talk about the political situation in the country, and what should be done in the weeks and months to come. The audience listens carefully and gravely.

Later that evening, a few distinguished guests make an appearance, sparking strong emotions in the group: Khaled Saïd's mother, sister, and niece are here.[2] Their presence is a strong symbol. Isn't this group, after all, a product of the "Khaled Saïd moment"? As in other events of the previous weeks, an activist (also a singer and a lutenist) does a little performance, singing the classical militant hymns of Cheikh Imām and poet Ahmad Fu'ād Negm. The evening ends with the customary collective photographs, as well as commemorative pictures with the groups' "heroes" (the liberated detainees and the martyr's family). Then, everyone starts cleaning up the apartment, piling up chairs, picking up trash, and enacting, through these small practices, this new collective identity they promote, that of the "youth who really love Egypt,"[3] which differentiates them from the outside world.

This tiny group, described here during one of its activities (*fa'āliyya*, pl. *fa'āliyyāt*) is the core of what I call the Alexandrian Protest Milieu (APM).[4]

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2   Khaled Saïd was a young Alexandrian man killed by police forces in June 2010, sparking an unprecedented protest wave in the coastal city (Ali 2012; Ali and El-Sharnouby 2014).

3   "*Shabāb biyhib masr bigad*" (Youth who really love Egypt) is one of the slogans put forward by many of the youth groups.

4   These analyses draw from an ongoing doctoral dissertation on contentious politics in Alexandria (El Chazli 2017). Research was conducted in Alexandria during several visits between November 2012 and February 2016. I conducted more than 50 interviews, participant observation, collected "digital traces," administered a survey, and mobilized different sources such as the press, blogs, etc. Finally, I consulted a database of 2000+ photographs and videos of protest in Alexandria. Interviews as well as very detailed photos and videos were used to reconstruct sequences prior to 2012 such as the one described above.

In many respects, the APM created the material and symbolic conditions for the mobilizations that took place in Alexandria on January 25, 2011.[5] Not that its members either predicted or, for many of them, even thought these mobilizations possible. But through their actions and their "activist work" (Nicourd 2009), they contributed to the emergence of a local Alexandrian political arena. They also helped create and circulate contentious frames, constructing the police as the enemy, and thus giving a vocabulary to many people to express their discontent (and sometimes *discover* this discontent). They were the ones who organized, on the ground, the January 25 marches that would end up launching the largest protest wave Egypt had known until then.

We cannot fully grasp what happened in Alexandria during the first sequence of the Egyptian Revolution (what came to be known as the "18 days") if we only look at macrostructural aspects of protest at the national level. What happened in Alexandria, and the way it happened, was closely related to the particular patterns of relations inside the APM, and also between the APM and other local players (including "traditional" parties and security agencies). By paying attention to how this milieu came to be, and then, on the ground, to how strategic interactions between the different players took place, it is possible to suggest a more empirically based approach to the emergent phases of protest episodes that would be attentive to the sequences of revolutionary conjunctures, rather than broad macrostructural readings of these events.

To do so, I pay close attention to a particular set of interactions during one day, January 25, 2011. I contend that a closer look at specific moments during a sequence is useful, as these moments can produce open-ended conjunctures (when "multiple futures coexist synchronically"), triggering "shifts in patterns of relations" (Ermakoff 2015, 110). By focusing on one day, we can observe and document precisely how players search "for behavioral cues from peers, their wait-and-see attitude, and their desire to align with a collective stance," which constitute potent indicators of the "emergence of mutual uncertainty" (Ermakoff 2015, 100).

This approach does not position itself as a refutation of the role of "social structures" in explaining revolutionary conjunctures. It simply displaces our focus from causes to microprocesses and mechanisms. In so doing, I want to understand what makes up these conjunctures without resorting to what Rod Aya calls the "two-stage leap of faith [...] from social change to griev-ances, and from grievances to revolt, without explaining either the genesis

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5   Or, in a similar sense, an "infrastructure for collective action" (Ismaïl 2006).

of specific grievances or the conversion of vague and various discontents into drastic but deliberate political action" (Aya 1979, 66). This approach recognizes the specificity of critical conjunctures, where behavioral scripts and routines tend to lose their efficacy, pushing players to rely on what their (immediate or imagined) reference groups do. Understanding what makes a crisis thus necessitates to focus on the microanalytics of the different players' interactions (Ermakoff 2015).

I first sketch a brief genealogy of the Alexandrian Protest Milieu. Then I focus on how this group crystallized around a police abuse case. Third, I look at how activists approached the preparation of the "Day of Rage." Fourth, I show how, through an iteration of concurring signs, activists starting redefining what was happening. Finally, I look at how activists were overwhelmed by what was going on, and how the logics of the situation soon took hold.

A Brief Genealogy of the APM

Alexandria, Egypt's "second capital,"[6] hosted various forms of activism throughout the twentieth century, sometimes in quite radical forms. Yet, after the different student protest waves of the 1960s and 1970s, and the subsequent rise of Islamic militancy in the 1980s and 1990s, the city seemed to lack its previous vibrant political life, following a national decline in contention and street politics, generally interpreted in the literature in terms of political "apathy" and "depoliticization" (for a critique, see Fillieule and Bennani-Chraïbi 2003).

Nationally, this political stalemate lasted until the early 2000s. Local politics in Alexandria had always been inscribed in the "national-institutional"[7] arena. The main players always linked their local activities to national strategies. For instance, the main organized opposition force, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), played a pivotal role in mobilizing Alexandrians on different occasions. During the Second Intifada solidarity mobilizations in the early 2000s, they were able to mobilize tens of thousands in the city. But these efforts were part of the Brothers' grand strategy. Nothing specifically Alexandrian was at stake.

During the 2000s, Alexandria witnessed a movement similar to Cairo's, albeit on a smaller scale. The pro-Palestinian solidarity movement (2000-2002)

6   Alexandria is Egypt's second most populous city, its wealthiest, as well as its most industrial one (Denis 1997, 23; Soliman 2011, 94). Activists, intellectuals, and artists like to call their city the "second capital" (*al-'āssima al-thāniya*) (El Chazli 2013).

7   By "national-institutional" I refer to a spatial and legal framework, which constitutes the formal political institutions of the Egyptian nation-state. Due the extreme centralization of the Egyptian state, these political activities are mainly localized in Cairo.

and the anti-Iraq War movement (2003) gave birth to a new political genera-tion, which formulated new ideas and tactics. In the mid-2000s, these different movements coalesced under the umbrella of the Kifāya movement, which was the first to federate intellectuals, artists, human rights activists, members of opposition parties and newly politicized youth from multiple ideological backgrounds (leftists, Arab-nationalists, Islamists, and liberals). However, Kifāya was never as large in Alexandria as it was in the capital. Tellingly, Alexandria activists would go to Cairo to attend protests organized there.

The period that followed saw repression and the deliberalization of the political sphere (Albrecht 2013; for an alternative reading, see Hassabo 2012). Nevertheless, by the end of 2009, rumors of Mohamed El-Baradei's[8] involve-ment in politics were circulating but not confirmed. Only in December of the same year did the Nobel Peace Prize winner publicize his will to promote democratic change in Egypt. His return to Egypt in February 2010 would initiate a strong protest wave and a remobilization of the opposition arenas in patterns relatively similar to those of Kifāya, under the banner of a newly formed National Association for Change (NAC) (Hassabo 2012).

In early 2010, a group of activists founded a Popular Campaign in Support of Mohamed El-Baradei (PCSMB) in Alexandria. It was meant to be a grass-roots movement, thus differing from the elitist (and rather Cairo-centric) functioning of the NAC. The group grew quickly by capitalizing on the momentum created by El-Baradei's return to Egypt. The intense online campaign on the behalf of the Nobel laureate was particularly efficient.[9] This heterogeneous group of people had one main goal: inspire as many people as possible to learn about El-Baradei while limiting the possibilities of repression. They learned from past experiences, selecting actions far less disruptive than those of more radical groups (e.g., simply walking in a shopping mall while wearing El-Baradei T-shirts).

In parallel with these dynamics, the radical left was also experiencing changes. The Trotskyist movement (the Revolutionary Socialists [RS]), had helped found a broader leftist platform, named the Popular Democratic Movement (Hachd), aiming at federating all the left-leaning activists in the northern city, without imposing the constraints of being a member of a clandestine organization or the stigma of being "communist." Other leftist

8   Mohamed El-Baradei was an Egyptian diplomat and later International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) executive and head. He is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.
9   Many interviewees (most notably those who weren't previously politically active) recall getting in touch with the group through Facebook. Wael Ghonim, a Google executive who would later create the famous "We Are All Khaled Saïd" page, managed the Facebook page supporting El-Baradei (Ghonim 2012).

microgroups, such as the Youth for Justice and Freedom (YJF), were also created during that period, as a local "franchise" of the group by the same name in Cairo. In any case, members of all these groups never exceeded 50 people who knew each other, but, somehow, their relations were still governed by the national agenda. For instance, the RS was closely linked to its Cairene counterparts, focusing on their agenda of the "downtrodden proletariat's struggle" (*kifāh al-kādihīn*), whereas the PCSMB promoted El-Baradei's project of "democratic change" (*al-taghyīr al-dimuqrātī*) in coordination with his main campaigners in the capital. It was a local event that changed these tendencies and largely contributed to the birth of a local arena, governed by its own logics, where intergroup relations started gaining importance over the national arena, crystallizing in the APM described above.

Khaled Saïd and the Framing of the Police as a Public Enemy

On a humid Alexandrian summer night, two policemen ventured into a cybercafé in the residential neighborhood of Cleopatra and soon got into an altercation with a customer. The policemen dragged the young man, Khaled Mohamed Saïd, outside the café. If the details of what happened next remain unclear, the result was Saïd's brutal death. The event, in itself, was anything but new. Cases of police abuse and torture had been commonplace in Mubarak's Egypt (Seif El-Dawla 2009). The difference in this case lay elsewhere. Several players seized the event and, through their work, constructed it as a public case, while designating an enemy, the police (Ismaïl 2012).

In the days that followed, opposition leader Ayman Nūr, who was visiting Alexandria on unrelated business, learned of Saïd's misfortune and published a picture of the young man's disfigured face on his Facebook page. Local leftist players quickly started organizing protests in Cleopatra and the surrounding neighborhoods. The momentum that built rapidly around the Khaled Saïd case, thanks especially to the online campaign launched by the newly created We Are All Khaled Saïd (WAAKS) Facebook page, encouraged local players to create something new to be able to coordinate on the ground. This marked the birth of what came to be called the Youth of the National Forces' Bureau (*maktab shabāb al-quwā al-wataniyya*), also referred to as the Coordination Bureau (*maktab el-tansī'*). Most of the youth groups active on the ground were represented in the CB. At the time, there was no equivalent institutionalized intergroup coordination in Cairo.

Between June and October 2010, the CB organized many protests, some many thousands strong,[10] something that had never been seen in Alexandria other than during sporting events or regional crises (e.g., support for Gaza.) This collaborative experience was central in bringing the Alexandrian groups closer together despite their ideological backgrounds.[11] The groups were now coordinating with each other much more than with their Cairene counterparts. Groups would sometimes protest with their local allies despite (or against) Cairo's stance. Typically, when a member of a given political group was facing repression (was arrested or was facing a trial), the others would automatically express their solidarity.[12]

By the end of 2010, the majority of Alexandrian activists personally knew each other and were embedded in a close-knit network of friendships. The relatively small numbers (not more than 50 people) and the common experience (of preparing for protests, getting arrested together, and so on) were the reason that a famous Alexandrian activist used this expression to explain why they all were so close: "You know, Alexandria is a one bedroom apartment! We all know each other, it's like a small family" (interview with M., August 2013, Alexandria). From that moment on, a stable (and small) population emerged to constitute the Alexandrian Protest Milieu.[13]

In the more general context of political deliberalization that seemed to prepare for the upcoming elections (parliamentary and presidential), the regime turned to more authoritarian measures (handing prison sentences to activists, resorting to physical violence more easily, and so on). The harsh repression that hit all political forces by the end of 2010 tied the Alexandrian groups together even more, but it also left them in a state of disarray and hopelessness. After the Khaled Saïd momentum, the political space was steadily closing. Many of them were given prison sentences and were continuously harassed by police forces.[14] This is the context in which the conference, described above, was held.

10   These were the protests in the aftermaths of Khaled Said's death.

11   A detailed account of this protest sequence can be found in the second chapter of my dissertation (El Chazli 2017).

12   One leading activist recounted how he would instruct younger activists not to protest, following Cairo's stance, but would go and participate individually (*bi-shakl fardī*) in solidarity with fellow Alexandrian activists (interview, January 2013).

13   Delineating the contours of this milieu was done both through interviews and through the consultation of hundreds of photographs and videos of the protests. Friendship relations and interactions (commenting, image tagging, etc.) on Facebook were also used.

14   This would affect their personal lives profoundly. In one case, an activist was suspended from his job. In another, state security officers called an activist's mother to tell her that her daughter, her daughter's fiancé, and their friends would all end up in prison.

On January 1, 2011, at around 12:20 a.m., a huge blast shook the popular neighborhood of Sīdī Bishr. A bomb had just gone off in front of the Church of the Two Saints, during the Saint Sylvester celebration mass. More than 20 people were killed and many more injured. In a matter of hours, angry protestors started rioting in the neighborhood, and the Central Security Forces (CSF) tried to restore order, with little success.[15] In the following days, the APM reorganized itself and launched many online campaigns, declaring their solidarity with the victims, calling on people to donate blood, and blaming the Ministry of the Interior for the bombing. When a few days later a young Salafi man was killed while being held by the State Investigation Bureau, as a suspect for the bombings, Alexandrian activists exploited the Khaled Saïd frame, pointing out the brutal police practices and the absence of security (El Chazli and Hassabo 2013). Simultaneously, mobilizations in Tunisia were beginning to get more media attention and interest from Egyptian activists. After Tunisian President Ben Ali fled his country on January 14, events unfolded rapidly in Egypt, initiating a sequence of intense organizing and preparation for a newly fixed protest date, January 25, conveniently also known as "Police Day." This concatenation of events renewed the hopes of many players in the possibility of launching a movement after the repression that had hit them in the previous weeks and months (El Chazli and Rayner 2014).

This is the broad context of January 25, full of feelings of hope and doubt in the possibility of change. Let us now tell the story of how these protests, through different local mediations, slowly developed into the greatest political crisis that Egypt had witnessed until then.

"The Revolution Starts on Tuesday at 2 p.m.," or How to Plan the Unpredictable

The planning of the January 25 actions was the result of different (sometimes separate) processes. First, it sprang, as was shown, from Egyptian activists' accumulated experience in mobilizing against the regime (El Chazli 2012). The development of street activism during the 2000s underlined its own strengths and limitations. Activists knew all too well how a demonstration usually ended, and how difficult it was for them to attract more people. Moreover, activists interpreted (rightly) the extreme repression of any

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15   The initial protests were organized by Christian youth and families angry at the police, whom they held responsible.

collective form of dissent by the end of 2010 as a signal that it was time for them to calm things down.[16] "To be honest, we were in a bad shape by late 2010 because of a great number of arrests. We knew that 2011 wouldn't go well for us […] We received very clear messages from the security apparatuses […] They were basically saying that by September 2011, all of us would be in prison."[17] When the momentum for January 25 started building online and in the media, activists on the ground were concerned about these recent interactions with the police. They planned accordingly. Second, the intrusion of an unknown third party, with a huge influence, changed the game. Unknown at the time, the administrators of the We Are All Khaled Saeed (WAAKS) page played a central role in suggesting protest starting points, usually while anonymously coordinating with activists on the ground.[18] Activists had to take into account the page's tremendous audience when deciding what to do.[19] Third, the coordination experience in Alexandria during the previous year, as recounted in the first part of this chapter, proved essential.[20]

In the continuation of the CB, the different players[21] met several times during the days leading up to the 25th. Three broad tendencies could be

16   After the peak of the El-Baradei and the Khaled Saïd moments, activists organized a public demonstration against the hereditary transmission of power from Mubarak Sr. to Mubarak Jr., a process that many believed to be underway. It was simultaneously organized, on September 21, 2010, in Cairo and in Alexandria. In the latter, an enormous security dispositive was deployed and 37 out of the 50 people demonstrating were arrested. Even more alarming for the activists, the "common folk" (*an-nās al-ʿādiyya*) were completely unresponsive to their cries for help (one activist kept shouting in a megaphone that if people did not come and demonstrate, the few demonstrators would end up in jail, yet no one came). Most activists interpreted this as a "bad sign," suggesting it might be time to back down, regroup, and reorganize (interviews with Alexandrian activists between 2012 and 2015).

17   Interview with a socialist activist, August 2013. Other interviewees confirmed this. For instance, one recalled how during protests in late 2010 the officers would mimic the "wait and see" and the throat slitting gestures.

18   The page's main admin, Wael Ghonim, gives a detailed account of his involvement in his book (Ghonim 2012). Many of my interviewees confirm Ghonim's account, especially the fact that there was a minimal coordination with them, usually without the local activists knowing who he was.

19   The page had more than 300,000 members on the eve of January 25 and the January 25 "event" had been sent to more than a million Egyptians.

20   Even if, due to the prevailing uncertainty of the situation, many players gave vague information about their plans, or even false information. Nevertheless, when these groups starting meeting on the ground on the 25th, as the day was starting to "succeed," they fully coordinated their action.

21   There are conflicting versions about who participated. Those who are usually cited as being present at least at one of the meetings are: the PCSMB (which hosted the meetings); April 6

distinguished in those meetings. A loose group of players (mainly the April 6 movement, PCSMB, YFJL) were enthusiastic about the coming day, but thought that the usual protest sites (such as the court house)[22] needed to be abandoned in favor of working-class districts. In contrast, political parties and more established groups (with older members) preferred the downtown option. Finally, a couple of players had their doubts about the event, for very different reasons. The Muslim Brotherhood Youth for instance, despite being present at all the meetings, finally informed the others that they would not be participating.[23] On the other hand, the radical left had its own doubts; for ideological reasons, they were unconvinced by the idea of a "preorganized revolution" as well as the focus on police violations instead of more "social" demands. They eventually decided to participate, but were completely surprised on the 25th:

> Our greatest hopes were to initiate a cycle like Kifāya [...] After Tunisia, we planned to launch protests in poorer areas to demand social justice, etc. We were discussing this with someone from PCSMB, and he suggested we should wait for the protests that were being called for by WAAKS [...] We told him that our problem was that we didn't want to mobilize only with respect to the police issue; we had other demands [...] But the 25th was a real shock. We had gotten everything wrong. We had even decided that we wouldn't raise the bar too high for our slogans. We thought that if we'd said "Down down..." no one would chant back. It was the opposite. We were saying our chants about minimum and maximum wage, while the lay people were saying "Down down..." and "No to Mubarak," and so on. (Interview with a socialist activist, August 2013)

The main idea for most of the organizers was as follows: small groups of activists would initiate small-scale protests in different, relatively close locations. They'd bet on their mobilizing efforts on the previous days, as well as the general context (*el-gaw el-'ām* – i.e., the post-Tunisia effect, the online campaign by WAAKS), to draw people in. This had several consequences.

movement; the Youth for Justice and Liberty (YFJL) movement; the radical left (represented by Hachd and/or the RS); al-Ghad Party; al-Wafd Party; al-Karama Party; youth representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood.

22   The different groups organized many protests in late 2010 in front of the court house (in the Manshiyya area). The police usually harshly repressed these gatherings.

23   Famously, the MB published on its website a few days before January 25 an article titled "Ten Demands to Avoid a Popular Revolution." See. http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/109759.

On the one hand, instead of having one small protest of about 50 activists (or even 100 or 200) that could be easily repressed, they would have four or five groups of ten people scattered around the eastern districts. This meant that if one of these protests were surrounded by police forces, it wouldn't be the end of the day as others could still go on. On the other hand, the multiplication of protest sites would force CSF squads to be scattered around the city. In smaller numbers, they would have a much harder time maintaining order, blocking access to streets, and rounding up protestors.

Every player made its own plans and tactics and at the last coordination meeting, held in extreme secrecy, the different groups informed each other of what they would be doing while withholding sensitive information, such as the exact starting location of the protest. And even though most groups ended up using similar strategies, they varied in regard to tactical details and in the way they prepared for the D-Day.[24] Between January 20 and 25, the groups marketed intensely for the event. WAAKS and other militant Facebook pages posted official protest meeting points and gave out mobile numbers of field coordinators. Many people called to get more information, or to offer their help. The PCSMB thus decided to organize a meeting on the 24th with people who had called. Almost 150 people showed up. This important turnout encouraged the PCSMB to organize differently from in the past; but it also encouraged them to be cautious. Indeed, many of those who had shown up were previously unknown to the activists. The campaign decided to organize three protests to start in the eastern district. "No one knew the starting points of these marches except the politburo of the PCSMB. Even members didn't know what would happen. We divided these numbers into groups of five, led by one person who would roughly know where the protest would leave from, not the exact location." Three levels were instituted: demonstrations' leaders (*qā'id muzāhara*), group heads (*rās magmū'a*), and protestors. The lowest level consisted of younger, less experienced activists as well as people who had called in the days before and offered their help. They would be told in the morning, by email, which district to head to. The group heads would step in at that point. Around 10 a.m., they would receive an email telling them where to go and a list of ten phone numbers to call. Each was responsible for coordinating with his group of five to ten to meet at a place at 1:30 p.m. They would then wait for their group and make sure they were not followed by police forces.

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24   "Every group was to organize according to its own tactics, without really telling the other. The only thing all of us knew is that we would be close to one another" (interview with an April 6 movement leading activist, January 2014).

The idea behind this division of labor was that if one of these small groups fell, it wouldn't be a handicap for the others. The demonstrations' leaders, a handful of more seasoned activists, were the only ones (along with the politburo obviously) to know where the final demonstrations would start. Every demonstration leader would call the group heads at 1:45 p.m. to tell them where to meet. They would inform the group heads of their location and wait for them to arrive, then in a matter of seconds, they would pull out Egyptian flags; distribute them and start chanting and marching. All of these tactics had one objective: dodge the police forces.

An Iteration of Concurring Signs: A Microanalysis of an Open-Ended Conjuncture

In a recent article, Ivan Ermakoff argues that "the clue to an understanding of causal disruption endogenous to social and historical processes lies in a systematic analysis of how factors affecting individual agency can bring about breaks in patterns of social relations" (Ermakoff 2015, 66). In these contexts, incidental happenings can become consequential by "induc[ing] shifts in patterns of relations" (p. 110). We must pay attention to apparently minor events (a street protest, like many others) and try to document how, in this particular situation, shifts in behavior and in stances occur, thus creating mutual uncertainty, the basis of contingency. In these moments, "scripts lose their behavioral relevance, and standard procedures become spinning wheels that offer no leverage on the situation for those who confront it" (ibid.). As we will see, in the early hours of January 25, 2011, activists were feeling a mixture of anxiety and excitement. Their previous experiences, that is, their dispositions, moderated their expectations (El Chazli 2012). Yet, as the day started to unfold, an iteration of concurring signs (situational clues observable by players on the ground) would reinforce the belief that *something can happen* and *is happening*. This process can be extrapolated as a hypothesis about how the first participants on the 25th evaluated their risks and slowly experienced shifts in these evaluations, inciting them to participate even more strongly.

On Tuesday, January 25, young Mohamed[25] stood in trepidation and anxiety on a rather empty street in eastern Alexandria. He gazed around

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25   Interview with Mohamed, December 2012. Mohamed, born in 1990, grew up in a middle-class family (his father was mid-level civil servant) in the western district of Al-Qabbāry. He notes coming from a "politicized" home, where political Islam wasn't appreciated even though his

him to see any familiar signs of police presence, but sensed none. At 11 a.m. Mohamed started calling the ten phone numbers that had been distributed to him earlier in the morning, thus following the plan established by his organization, the PCSMB. He was assigned to the popular neighborhood of Abū Kharrūf (in the northeast of Alexandria). The then-20 year old instructed his group to meet at 12 p.m. around the al-'Assāfra hospital.[26] "Be there at 12 sharp. At 12:05, we won't be there," he reminded them over the phone. Mohamed knew some of the ten people he called from previous political activities. The others had given their numbers to the PCSMB on the previous day. The neighborhood, Abū Kharrūf, had been "prepared" (*mu'ahalla*) for the march; on the 24th, Mohamed and others from the PCSMB had distributed hundreds of flyers calling on people to participate in the marches. They had spoken to the "common folk" (*an-nās al-'ādiyya*), encouraged them to participate, discussed their opinions and calmed their fears. As anxious as he was, Mohamed was hopeful.[27] Although having had to battle with familial constraints, he was determined to participate.[28] On the days leading up to the 25th, he actively published (self)reassuring messages on the necessity *and* possibility of change on his Facebook profile and on his friends.[29]

Mohamed led his small group to a meeting point, received minutes earlier from the main field organizer of the al-'Assāfra demonstration, Sameh.[30]

brothers were sympathizers. His deceased father was a Nasserist. After a series of minor political experiences, he began participating steadily after the April 6, 2008, protest. He considers that he became "what we call a political activist after the death of Khaled Saïd."

26   Al-'Assāfra is a popular district on the southern side of Alexandria. Alexandria is commonly divided into a *baharī* (maritime) side and a *qiblī* (southern) side, that doesn't really fit into a north/south division. It also tends to equate with a class divide. Abū Kharrūf is a neighborhood in that district.

27   "Pairs of positive and negative emotions form 'moral batteries' that indicate a direction for action, away from the unattractive state and toward the attractive one" (Jasper 2014, 211).

28   On January 19th, he changed his profile picture on Facebook, and we can now see him holding a sign stating, "I am participating on January 25 [...] I am [a] free [man]." On January 20th and 21st, his Facebook updates show his personal dilemmas. On the 20th, he writes, "My mom doesn't want me to participate on January 25 [...] What should I do????" The next days, he says, "I don't know what to do: D:D:D after convincing mother of my participation, now my brother doesn't want to go: D:D:D what should I do now????"

29   He shares on Facebook a famous protest song by the poet Ahmad Fu'ād Negm (January 23), as well as statuses such as, "If I die, mother, don't cry, I am going to die so that my homeland can live" or "Bread, Freedom, Human dignity" (one of the chosen slogans for the protests). On the next day (January 24), "Yes We Can" and "For you... For the future of your children and of mine... I participate on the 25th."

30   Born in the early 1980s, Sameh went through many political experiences during the 2000-2010 decade. From a Muslim Brotherhood background, he then oriented toward liberal/secular

A more seasoned activist, he was supposed to lead the demonstration and decide what to do next according to his evaluation of potential risks. Mohamed remembers, "We started walking around and people would ask us 'is this *the* demonstration?' [*al-muzāhara*] [...] We began chanting around 2 p.m. At that point, we were maybe 15-20-25 [...] not more than 30 in any case." To Mohamed's amazement, the numbers grew rapidly in response to the chants of the small group. As soon as the demonstration was big enough, Sameh, Mohamed and the others began to lead to the march through the narrow streets and alleyways (pl. *hawārī*, s. *hāra*) of Abū Kharrūf.

Little more than a kilometer away from Sameh and Mohamed, 'Abdel Samad[31] was also getting ready to lead a demonstration from his neighborhood. Until 1 p.m., he stayed in his supermarket, located in his neighborhood, thus giving the impression that nothing was going on.[32] At around 1:30, he started calling up group heads. All of these groups together represented approximately 30-40 people. Also, since he had good relations with some of the Muslim Brotherhood youth, about 15-20 of them decided to join him in the protest as participants (and not in the name of their organization). This demonstration was due to start in front of the 'Abdel-Halīm Mahmūd Mosque, also in al-'Assāfra district. 'Abdel Samad recalls, "As soon as we started walking, the 'Down, down' [with Hosni Mubarak] slogan started being chanted. People started chanting their own slogans that even we, as demonstration leaders, hadn't prepared."

A few blocks away, yet another protest was being launched almost simultaneously. The April 6 movement (A6M) had prepared its own demonstration, without knowing it was so close to the PCSMB groups. "We were no more than five. We started chanting but for at least 45 minutes people were not responsive. The police started arriving and roughing us up, tried to arrest one of us" (interview with a leading April 6 movement activist, January 2014). It seemed as if it was ending before it even started, as usual. Nevertheless, the activists started talking to people, "'Do you remember meat? Do you know how much it costs today? Even the lentils that you could eat, how much does it cost? Can you buy any of that for your son?'" (interview with a leading April 6 movement activist, January 2014).

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formations such as the El-Ghad Party and the DFP. It was later that he joined the PCSMB and became one of its main leaders.

31   Born in the early 1980s, 'Abdel Samad had a similar trajectory as Sameh, cycling through some of the liberal opposition parties, while being personally close to Islamists. He was one of the first coordinators of the PCSMB in Alexandria.

32   Indeed, early in the morning, two informers from state security came by his shop and kept an eye on him.

Following up with these discussions, the activists started chanting "social slogans."[33] The people in the market (sū') started to be responsive. Meanwhile, the Security seemed to have decided it was going to end the protest, and it prepared to engage.

Luckily for the A6M activists, at that moment, 'Abdel Samad's demonstration arrived from behind the CSF. "They were confused by our arrival. The officers started talking to us politely, saying that we could do a sit-in but not to get out" (interview with 'Abdel Samad, January 2014). But, "suddenly, there were 2000 of us [...] The Security changed its tone, and started to negotiate. 'Do not go outside, they'd say.' But it wasn't us anymore, the People were deciding" (interview with 'Issām, January 2014). For the activists, a new player was in the street, one that they had always imagined, talked about, but never really seen: "the People." And this new presence was exhilarating for them; it boded well for what was to come next, thus authorizing the activists to step over the previously established red lines. The Security tried to stop the demonstration by splitting the march in two, but failed to contain the movement and eventually had to withdraw from the scene. "We then reached the Gamal Abdel Nasser Avenue [one of the main arteries of eastern Alexandria]" (interview with 'Issām, January 2014). The demonstrations were now really taking off.

As the demonstration kept growing bigger, Sameh, Mohamed, and the others tried to keep control over the excited crowd. Sameh was sitting on the shoulders of a fellow activist, wearing an Egyptian flag as a cape. Shouting as loudly as possible, he tried to give guidelines to the protestors, "Anyone of you who passes by a car, do not hit it, do not stand on it, do not damage any property, we are good people [nās muhtaramīn], we are a good people [sha'b muhtaram] [Protestors cheer, applaud and wave their little flags] [...] Long live Egypt! [The crowd repeats] Long live Egypt! [The crowd repeats]." As he shouted the century-old slogan, the march started moving again through the narrow alleys. While they kept walking through the maze that is Abū Kharrūf, and more people joined the march, a rotba[34] (police officer) approached the apparent leaders of the march, i.e., those chanting the slogans. "'Don't leave here, the officer said, stay [in the harāt (district)], it's just for your safety.' But obviously, it wasn't about our safety [...] He didn't

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33   Typically, "they augmented the price of oil, they augmented the price of sugar; tomorrow we'll need to sell our furniture" to be able to buy food.

34   *Rotba* literally means a rank (as in lieutenant, captain, general, etc.). It is used in Egypt as a synonym of officers, and more specifically, higher-ranking officers. The *rotab* (plural) are identifiable by their epaulets.

know how to deal with us [...] The numbers were too big. That's why he was so polite" (interview with Mohamed, December 2012).

Nevertheless, at that point, they felt that their numbers were still not big enough, so they complied, and marched around the neighborhood, attracting even more people as they went. The protest was now huge. "We felt that he [the officer] was scared, as if 100,000 questions were racing in his head. 'Where did all these people come from? What are we going to do with them?'" Mohamed recalls. This time, when the officer tried again to convince them to stay "inside," and not to spill out on the main street, they did not comply. Sameh simply waived in disdain to the astonished officer, and entered the main street. They were exhilarated by the numbers and by the walls trembling under their mighty chants. Taken aback, the police forces stood still as the march passed through, which many protestors interpreted as a good omen: the police were not going to shoot.

"We were now on the main street. When that happened, *we saw the numbers for the first time* [...] We couldn't see clearly before that, as we were in narrow alleys. The numbers were huge. Spontaneously, we found ourselves in tears from the sight" (interview with Mohamed, December 2012). In these few minutes, the activists first redefined the situation, "as we started walking, we felt that [...] maybe it's not a revolution, but it's the beginning of the downfall of the regime [...] it's beginning of asking for rights, having demands met." They observed their surroundings and looked for concurring signs: older people waving and giving victory signs (two fingers forming the letter V) from their balconies; a street vendor using his megaphone to chant "Down with Hosni Mubarak"; people pouring out of buildings to march; the arrival of another protest to join forces, and so on.

Not far away, the other PCSMB group that had joined the A6M one was experiencing a similar trajectory. "The numbers were incredible, unbelievable. We were congratulating each other, as if we had already won. But now what? We were calling our April 6 friends who left from Shubra in Cairo, telling each other about the turnout [...] We were trying to figure out where should we go? What would make sense in Alexandria?" While activists were desperately trying to keep control of the protest, they were facing this typical property of political crises: strategic uncertainty. As most of the tacit rules governing contentious politics were quickly crumbling down, they felt a crippling sense of confusion,

An officer told me, "tell them to stop!" and I said "if you can't control them I can't control them either!" They weren't able to deal with us. They didn't engage, they just stared at us and let us go. When I called

the Operation Room,[35] [...] they said use your best judgment; you're the one on the ground. We kept on walking without knowing where we were going. When we met again with security forces, they had blockaded a street to prevent us from going back to the *Baharī* side. Before I could even think of what we should do, people had already pushed back the cordon, and went through. We just followed now. (Interview with 'Abdel Samad, January 2014)

Carried Away by the People

If the situation's meaning was starting to shift, another important thing was happening on the ground. It was ever clearer to the activists that it was getting tougher to keep the demonstration "in line." The numbers were continuing to grow. But more importantly, the activists were already exhausted. Not only because of the efforts they had made in the few previous hours (running back and forth, shouting and chanting at the top of their lungs, lifting each other on their shoulders, and, obviously, walking.) They were exhausted from the past two weeks of intense organizing, both physically and psychologically. "We were not sleeping [...] Fear and horror at the idea that the day would fail [...] And that the regime would unleash its wrath on us because of what we've done [...] Imagine if after all of that organizing, no one showed up [...] All of that was a great load on us, a lot of anxiety" (interview with Mohamed, December 2012). Now the demonstration had its own life, its own dynamic. The "regular people's" chants were much more radical than the list decided by the WAAKS page and even by the field activists.

Simultaneously, news arrived that another protest – one that had started in the downtown district of Manshiyya – had been dealt with violently by the police around the Sīdī Gābir area. "We tried to halt down the march and started explaining what was happening. We told them that our youth [*shabābna*] was being attacked by the police in Sīdī Gābir, and what should we do? The final decision was the street's to take. To a certain extent, our mission was over." A young man shouted that the protest should go and "teeet"[36] the police and was acclaimed by the now thousands of protestors. "It was like they weren't afraid anymore," Mohamed remembers. The march

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35   The PCSMB had created an Operation Room (OR) (*ghurfat 'amaliyyāt*) composed of three senior activists, centralizing information and communications between the ground groups, and also feeding the internet with information.

36   Mohamed simulates a bleep censor, suggesting an insult.

kept on going on the Corniche Avenue, filling up one side and leaving the other one to traffic. It eventually reached Sīdī Gābir.[37] When they arrived, the authorities had cut off the electricity in the neighborhood. CSF were massively firing tear gas.[38] The protestors did not flee in face of the attack. Rather, they hid in the multiple alleyways surrounding Sīdī Gābir. People would regroup and start small marches, reproducing what they had just done (maybe for the first time) a few hours earlier. "This was extremely impressive," recalls Mohamed, grinning. "Our people [the activists] were slowly leaving. Activists weren't chanting the slogans. The people were. They were the ones leading the marches."

In his account of the preparation of the January 25 marches, ʿIssām underlined a central feature of street protests during the Mubarak days, "You know, our problem was […] since we started this experience, the security services [(al-amn] would end the protests […] We never had to think of how to end! [*Laughs*]" Most of the activists quickly found themselves in that strange dilemma; they hadn't planned for their marches to succeed. So they hadn't really planned on how the day should end. Their best-case scenario was to leave the alleyways and hold a main street for a few hours. "Before starting, we had to discuss the issue of how to end. How should we end the demonstration? If the turnout is low, and there is not much responsiveness from the people, then we should walk for an hour, and then stop. If the numbers reached a thousand protestors, and that was our maximal hope, we would try to reach 45th Street."[39] For others, such as the radical left, the idea was to create a momentum in a popular neighborhood that would become a social base for subsequent political actions (interview with a socialist activist, August 2013).

Activists had to improvise with little information at hand. "Obviously, at that point, we did not know what was going on on the other side, in downtown. We weren't really communicating with them." The scarce news arriving indicated that clashes were ongoing in Sīdī Gābir. This became their "natural" destination. Others decided to head for the governorate (*muḥāfaza*) building, "because this was what represented the state in Alexandria."

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37   This is a 6.7 km walk (4.1 miles). The Google Maps estimate for this walk is 1h 23m.
38   As far as timing goes, this is a first difference with Cairo. On the 25th, the Cairo CSF intervened violently at midnight by charging on Tahrir Square. Up until that point, repression had been present but incidental.
39   Interview with ʿAbdel Samad (January 2014). 45th Street is a main street of the Miami neighborhood in eastern Alexandria.

> People were asking me "Where to now?" and the OR had left everything in my hands. They just informed me that there was another protest ahead of us, and one behind us. People in the crowd were suggesting destinations: the security services headquarters, the *Muhāfaza*, etc. People agreed on the *Muhāfaza*. It's very far as you know [laughs], but we were like, why not? (Interview with 'Abdel Samad, January 2014)

As soon as they got there, the power was cut off in the neighborhood, and the police started to fire tear gas canisters. An activist described the sound of the incessant shooting and of the armored vehicles racing in the streets as "horrifying" (*mor'ib*). He then went to a café; "At that point, we decided that the day was over. At least for us" (interview with 'Issām, January 2014). Indeed, by the evening, most of the activists were exhausted. Feeling that what was going on was out of their hands, they slowly left the streets and started regrouping in cafés and in some of their headquarters, depending on where they were. For the first time, they were seeing the "national" news and images of Tahrir Square. These images confirmed their feeling about what was going on; this was a different scale from what they were used to. The different groups started to communicate heavily and reflect on what should be their next steps. Also, many activists had been arrested around the city on the 25th. People were starting to gather information, heading to police stations, and looking for friends and colleagues who weren't answering their phones or replying to text messages. The day had taken a strange turn for most of the participants. And as excited as they were, they felt distraught in the face of what might come next. Complete uncertainty was the main feature of the situation. They had been waiting for that moment for a long time, yet, in some sense, they had never really expected it.

Conclusion

I have focused on a few interactions that might seem tangential to a general explanation of "revolutions" or "political crises," but which are still helpful for understanding the local social dynamics underlying the "revolt." I am not suggesting that these localized interactions are "representative" of broader causal mechanisms, or that they constitute an alternative explanation to the causes of revolutions. I simply point out certain processes that seem to tell us more (or at least a different story) about how crises start, how they develop, and how they get "out of control."

If what is usually considered as the causes of revolutions (frustration, unemployment, absence of freedoms, etc.) is observable, most analyses don't really tackle how these "causes" produce a global political crisis in a given country at a given moment. In a way, political crises (just as wars, and other great events) seem to transcend their causes (Dobry 2009; Rayner 2005). They appear like a different class of phenomena that require explanations of their own. Obviously, a more profound exploration of these insights would require the study of a longer time frame and the interactions of many more players.

In accordance with what social movements studies tell us, it is obvious here that the studied collective actions are "product(s) of learned and historically grounded performances" (Tilly 2008, 4). The players who organized the January 25 actions in Alexandria shared a set of ideas, beliefs, repertoires, and know-how. Even when they chose to do something new, it was generally informed by their past experiences, notably with repression and "failed" previous mobilizations.

If we take into account what players think, perceive, and evaluate, it becomes obvious that most players (both activists and security apparatuses) don't believe that these mobilizations will amount to anything. Players don't plan ahead. Activists are extremely skeptical; most of them do not plan an "ending" for the actions they organize. The security apparatuses, on the other hand, don't imagine that these mobilizations will differ from their previous experiences with protestors; they don't plan an alternative strategy other than their usual "beat and arrest." That is why, on the ground, most of the CSF squads just didn't know what to do; they stood confused and generally didn't act. In reaction, protestors were free to interpret this inaction in multiple ways: the police is sympathetic to their action, the police has its limits, the police is not as strong as it seems, etc. In any case, the consequences were multiple. In a chain reaction, as more people saw others protesting and not being repressed or beaten up, more started joining, and so on.

The situational decision to radicalize the demonstration on the ground (crossing symbolic or physical red lines) is informed by other "signs" decoded by activists on the ground. Other than the aforementioned case of the police, popular support in the street or from balconies, greater turnout than the usual, participation of "unusual ordinary people" (older women, people of different social classes, etc.) are all interpreted as signs of a shifting situation. "That Egypt was a society in which large numbers of people were discontent was widespread knowledge. But that Egypt was a society of people willing to act on that discontent was a surprise [...] What seems to have changed

in January 2011 with astonishing rapidity was less people's understanding of one another's preferences than their understanding of one another's practical commitment to change [...] As soon as such determination was in evidence, demonstrations quickly snowballed" (Brown 2014, 301-302).

The story of the Egyptian revolutionary situation (tracing processes, carving up sequences) needs, in my view, to take into account this multiplicity of simultaneous contingent actions and interactions, which brought a multitude of marginal localized action into great unanticipated consequences. Tracing these contingencies does not, I think, mean that we fall back on an "old eventful history" that obfuscates social structures and their impact (Hassabo and Rey 2015). These contingencies are part of the explanation and should be taken seriously.

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6   Violence, Social Actors, and Subjectivation in the Egyptian Revolution

Farhad Khosrokhavar

Abstract

This chapter gives an account of what we call the social actors' "subjectivation" in the Egyptian Revolution. This notion encompasses their emotions, their strategic calculations, their mood, and their cultural features. Although structural factors like the economy and politics and, in particular, the geopolitics of the region play an important role in most of the Arab societies, too often they are stressed at the expense of the "subjective" state of the social actors. This chapter accounts for the revolution on the basis of the "subjectivation" hypothesis that highlights the interaction between the people and elites.

Keywords: subjectivation, desubjectivation, social actor, subject, emotions

The Arab Revolutions and Subjectivation

The analysis of violence in the Egyptian Revolution gives an account of what we call the social actors' "subjectivation," encompassing their emotions, their strategic calculations, their mood, and their cultural features (Goodwin and Jasper 1999). Although structural factors like the economy and politics and in particular the geopolitics of the region play an important role in most of the Arab societies, too often they are stressed at the expense of the "subjective" state of the social actors. This chapter accounts for the revolution on the basis of the "subjectivation" hypothesis that highlights the interaction between the people and elites.

The notion of subjectivation was developed first in psychoanalytical circles in the early 1990s and then taken up by French social scientists in order to reintroduce the notion of the "subject" in social movements. For Touraine, Wieviorka, and Dubet among others who have been working on social movements, subjectivation is a process by which one becomes a subject capable of assuming the role of a social actor within social movements or outside them (Touraine, Wieviorka, and Dubet 1984). The notion intends to bridge the gap between the intimate and the social spheres, the public and the private spheres. It preserves a psychological dimension, notably by introducing the counterconcept of "desubjectivation" based on despair and the inability to assume the role of a social actor within the social framework (Touraine and Khosrokhavar 2000; Touraine 1997, 2013). Touraine's view of subjectivation is based on a heroic conception of the subject as a person who dissociates herself from others and acts in an atomistic manner in order to fend off the domination of the social system. In this regard subjectivation is an act of insubordination and self-assertion within a social context marked by the hegemony of class, groups, and the state.

In my view, subjectivation is more related to the situation of the individual within a group of street protesters or in other gatherings in which a new type of intersubjective relationship develops that relates the individual to the group through emotions and makes possible a new type of social action by combining them with "on the spot" rationalizations and strategies that did not exist before their encounter. Subjectivation, in this case, is intersubjective by its very nature, in contrast to Touraine's view. Subjectivation has some affinity with empowerment; but whereas the latter insists on social conditions, the former is more sensitive to the psychological conditions of the individual. When individuals are discouraged, one might talk of "desubjectivation," that is the loss of the capacity to mobilize one's mental resources in order to promote social action.

Subjectivation transforms passive moods into active emotions that promote action, in particular, social protest. The origin of this transformation is obscure: rumors circulate that "others" have thrown themselves into the streets and braved the repressive forces of the state. The individual is hesitant at the beginning, and once in the street, the spectacle of a minority engaging in demonstrations encourages her to follow in their footsteps; the shared emotion heightened through slogans creates a collective feeling of shared indignation toward the government. Through subjectivation, what was accepted as a sad fact of life becomes unbearable due to heightened indignation, shared and amplified by the others. One young male participant to Tahrir Square told me:

> We all shared a deep discontent toward a regime that did not take us into account but we were passive, we did not react. What pushed me to do so was first the Tunisians who ousted their corrupt president and then, our shared feeling of indignation through the Web and, more important, gathering in Tahrir Square. There happened something that cannot be put easily in words: We became one body through shouting our rage against the regime. The more they tried to intimidate us, the more we became careless about our life. Being together gave us a sense of immunity. I recovered my lost dignity.[1]

Subjectivation is a push toward empowerment but it has a unique side, including the feeling of indignation. What did not seem to push toward the public expression of anger and outrage suddenly becomes unacceptable. The cause can be the "others' action." The "others" can be the few people who dared come to the street to voice their discontent, but it can also be another society. In the Egyptian case, Tunisia's ability to put an end to the autocratic rule of Ben Ali through the Jasmin Revolution played a role: the "others" (Tunisians) did it, why can't Egyptians, the standard bearers of the oldest civilization in the world, achieve what a tiny country was able to perform?

Subjectivation is also based on the "right" to be recognized as a subject (in the Egyptian case, to be a citizen), contrary to the traditional viewpoint that made the individual subservient to the community (the pan-Arabist nation or the Islamist *umma* in the case of Egypt). The right to express one's discontent even in a country where the notion of the citizens' rights is not institutionalized as in the Western countries is a new phenomenon, and to promote this status of citizenship the person views herself as entitled to respect and permitted to revolt if her government does not accept this right. There is a modern side to subjectivation that binds respect to the process of individuation and makes the dignity of the citizen the pillar of his (or her) identity. This young woman who took part in Tahrir Square's movement expresses it beautifully:

> I was a noncitizen, a nonhuman being in a double sense: as an Egyptian and as a woman. I had no dignity. I was nothing, less than nothing. In Tahrir Square I recovered my dignity as much as a citizen as a woman. The others respected me; they did not try to pinch me or rub their body against mine, even when we were close to each other. We found ourselves as moral beings. We were immoral because we were denied our being

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human by the regime. Once together, our aim was at the beginning to overthrow the pharaoh [Mubarak] and then, bit by bit, we became aware of our human values: we helped each other, we helped those who became ill, we organized cultural events, we built a new world in miniature. We recovered our dignity and the more the *baltagia* [the militia of the regime] tried to threaten us, the less we were afraid, because we had discovered a new identity. We were not violent but did not accept violence on their side. We tried to defend ourselves without becoming violent in a wild manner. We disarmed some *baltagia* but we did not beat them to death, we just made them flee or brought them to the soldiers who were close by. They let them go. There I felt I was a citizen, nonviolent, respectful of the others, even when they were so mean, like the militia. I became aware of myself as somebody who asked for respect and who was respected as an individual and as a woman. I was sexually respected, not harassed by the men that surrounded me as it often happens in the bus or on the street.

Here subjectivation is also remoralization and a new type of gender behavior.

Another protester, Ahad Soueif, thought that being at Tahrir Square enabled the participants to develop a sense of togetherness that made the collective action meaningful: "We had come together, as individuals, millions of us, in a great cooperative effort" (Soueif 2012). A local leader of a minority trade union, a worker probably in his late 30s, has a similar view with a specific reference to his origins and his social struggle:

As a worker I was a minority there. Many were younger than me and we were not numerous. I belong to the new Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions [EFITU] and not the corrupt Egyptian Trade Union Federation [ETUF]. The others did not understand my feelings, but what united us was stronger than what separated us. Here I was, with my paltry salary, while the others looking for dignity were much better off. But we came to understand that whatever our claims, Mubarak had to go. I became closer to the movement when we found the *baltagia* in front of us. There, we forgot about our differences and came together without any afterthought. We fought them and there; we found our dignity as citizens, not as a worker or as a student, but simply as a citizen.

Subjectivation means celebrating the new togetherness so that people do not fall into the mundane routines of daily life as commented Israa Abdel-Fattah, a member of the April 6 movement: "We don't want life to go back to normal until Mubarak leaves" (Sherwood 2011).

Subjectivation involves claiming to be an individualized citizen in a society where citizenship is trampled upon by authoritarian nationalism and fundamentalist or radical Islamism. It opens up the assertion of the self as a person who participates in politics through street protests in which shared emotions of indignation and frontal opposition to the state become the major means to achieve the "civil society" in a subjective manner, without the institutional framework that underpins an objective civil society. In brief, subjectivation makes it possible to be a politically recognized individual in a new framework of a shared community of emotions through which people endeavor to accomplish their desire to be a respected subject. The latter desires to take part in decisions concerning their collective destiny within a society in which this capacity is denied to the individual.

Subjectivation also relates the individual to a "would-be social movement" which develops in a progressive manner through this very process of shared emotions and grievances in a period of effervescence created by putting together the activated emotions of indignation and moral demands. Contrary to the working-class movements in which the economic condition of the workers was the dominant characteristic of their association and protest movements, in the new social movements and particularly in the Egyptian Revolution, the loose association of individuals with disparate social conditions gave birth to collective action against the Mubarak regime. This was made possible through "subjectivation": the latter compensated for the heterogeneous conditions of the people, creating a unity of emotions autonomous from their "objective" social conditions.

One important dimension of subjectivation is the loss of fear through a complex mechanism that has to do with the transition from passivity to activity and the sense of sharing the same destiny with the others. Becoming fearless is the beginning of the victory, as Ahmad Mahmoud puts it crudely: "I will come every day until he [Mubarak] leaves because now I know that we have won [...] When we stopped being afraid, we knew we would win" (McGreal 2011).

Here we focus on a specific type of subjectivation, namely the one that brought about the Egyptian Revolution and which built up emotions through two major notions laden with strong emotions, namely nonviolence (*selmiyah*) and dignity (*karamah*).

Few voices were heard that had doubts about the outcome of the forthcoming revolution. Some belonged to the Mubarak regime, but others felt doubts about a revolution that aimed at ousting the president without any concrete project, as put by this middle-class man in his 50s, a teacher at the university of Cairo:

> People want to get rid of Mubarak but instead of planning for the future, they gather at Tahrir Square, hang out, and celebrate being together. This is not a project for a new society. They've gone on a picnic to Tahrir Square – this is their revolution. We have a tourist economy that is already suffering from the unrest. I see a bleak future for these young people. They are idealists and who do not have the slightest idea of what politics is about. I am afraid for the future.

A man in his 40s, who spoke English and refused to tell me what his job was (he was probably a higher-up in the security forces), said: "These young people believe that they can put an end to the rule of the army. They have ousted Mubarak, but the result is chaos. I know this society. After some time people will ask for a strong power and the only institution there is, is the army. Egypt needs a pharaoh; it has been always so, since five thousand years ago."

At the outset the Arab revolutions promoted nonviolence as a major motto, and they framed their emotions in order to stress their refusal to become violent. This attitude was not due exclusively to the new subjective stance of the revolutionary actors, but also to the invention during the last two decades of what might be called the "subjective civil sphere" or the "emotional civil sphere" in Egyptian society in particular and in most of the Arab world in general (Alexander 2011; Khosrokhavar 2015). In the two decades preceding the Arab uprisings, education became widespread, young girls became a sizeable proportion of the students, social media made headway, and a new "pan-Arabism" developed from below that provided a sense of common culture despite major differences among the new generations of Arabs (Khosrokhavar 2012).

But nonviolence and its status changed drastically during the five years after the overthrow of Mubarak in Egypt in January 2011. This period has a history of its own. The challenge is to understand it in terms of a sociology of affects, emotions, and the ad hoc subjective civil sphere, with the end result being the return of authoritarianism and the repression of many social actors who had accomplished the Egyptian Revolution.

Tahrir Square was the birthplace of the Egyptian Revolution, the "topos" where the logic of emotions and the utopia of a new society blended into a dream that could be accomplished on a small scale at that place, the task of the revolution being its extension to all of Egypt (Khosrokhavar 2012).

Tahrir Square was of course not the entire script of the revolution, which also occurred in other major cities (in particular, Alexandria: see Chapter 5) and progressively extended to many parts of Egyptian society. But Tahrir

Square epitomized the revolution, a place where affects and emotions were framed according to the dual principles of nonviolence and dignity and a new "community" was built to respect them. Participants overcame fear of the government by taking part in the demonstrations. Going beyond the "awe" inspired by the state was a collective experience in many uprisings in the Arab world; the so-called awe of the state (*haiba al dawla*) had been a major obstacle to protest movements in a region where peaceful demonstrations can end up facing violence from the police or the military. The Egyptian Revolution also developed a "spatialized emotion center" in Tahrir Square, a "topos" in which the major sentiments and emotions crystallized in a ritualized fashion, influenced by the characteristics of that square and the socialization process within it, drawing on its history as the venue for nationalism during the Nasser era and the theater of a movement against British colonialism in the late nineteenth century. At Tahrir Square violence was excluded: no violence toward women (the complaints were about the behavior of the security forces outside Tahrir Square), toward the Christians (Copts could celebrate their rituals without any fear of being harassed), toward nonpracticing Muslims. As one student in his mid-20s said few months later:

> We wanted to be the mirror of the future Egyptian society. We excluded violence, we tried to be kind toward each other, tolerant. Now, with hindsight, I think that we were too naïve. We thought we could change Egypt by changing our attitudes at Tahrir Square. Still, it was a wonderful experience for me and I developed a new way of looking at myself and at others.

During the occupation Tahrir Square was kept tidy (whereas many streets of Cairo are rather untidy, even dirty). It had a life of its own during the revolution proper and it had its own free hospital, cultural events, theater, music, and more. In the adjacent streets art exhibitions developed, mainly related to the revolution and its glorification. In this community, the feeling of a new life as a pure civil society, outside the realm of the repressive state, was experienced by the people who actively took part in it in the name of subjective dignity (*karamah*), as opposed to the indignity of state repression. Subjectivation was synonymous with nonviolent, responsible citizenship holding fast to the place and remaining there in a decent manner in order to denounce the Mubarak regime.

Tahrir Square, during the Revolution and for many months afterward, meant an alternative society to the one proposed by the repressive state.

In it religious differences were swept aside between the Muslims and the Christians (Copts) and even those who did not strongly believe in God. This utopian civil sphere became part of the identity of those who thought of the Egyptian Revolution as a radical break with the past, a rebirth of society under the guise of a new government that would not only represent them, but would be consonant with them in their heart and soul in an idealistic manner. Tahrir Square would be the showcase of the future Egyptian society; in it social relations were devoid of violence and based on an empowerment founded on the rejection of political authoritarianism.

This logic of sentiments at Tahrir Square became part and parcel of the period that witnessed the gradual separation between those who believed in this "effervescent community" and the rest of society, exposed to a dire economic situation and for whom Tahrir Square became a stumbling block to a "normal society." What might be called "Tahrirization" was based on the difference between those who wanted to perpetuate the ideal of the revolution in its global aspects and those who believed that the revolutionary period was over and that, after Mubarak's ouster, life should get back to normal.

During the Egyptian Revolution proper society, at least in large cities, was mostly opposed to Mubarak. Those who were not politically involved or did not reject Mubarak outright were either overawed by the demonstrations at Tahrir Square or felt somehow "ashamed" to demonstrate for the declining president. His fate was akin to the Shah of Iran in 1979. Even the minority who supported the Shah did not express it openly, either because they did not want to go beyond certain levels or because of the logic of "shame" in front of those who demonstrated massively and were exposed to repression by the police or the military.

This feeling of being a minority with a "nonlegitimate" claim in front of a government that has lost its legitimacy because it has been too repressive and at the same time has lost its capacity to frighten others, is part of the scenario that makes demonstrations in support of this type of government "shameful": not because it is repressive, but due to the fact that it is not able to show its legitimacy by a show of force and the capacity to intimidate. Those who display their opposition accept risks that are not acceptable to the others (the proponents) and who entertain also a sentiment of guilt in consequence of the indirect interaction with those opponents who demonstrate against the powers that be and who, through their slogans, actions, and gestures make the others feel the burden of a guilty conscience riddled with implicit self-incrimination as being the indirect coauthors of repression.

Sometimes, what occurs in the demonstrations in front of those who do not demonstrate is an "inversion scheme": those who are protesting have already won legitimacy over those who do not participate in the protest movement and who, because they are either against it or fearful of it, refuse to join the protesters. They feel the pinch of guilt, shame, or at least powerlessness in front of the spectacle of those who demonstrate and dare to question the government. By overcoming fear, those who protest play a role in preventing those who support the government from acting in the public sphere through role inversion: to stand by the government becomes illegitimate.

Tahrir Square underwent the same processes during the heroic period of the revolution proper that lasted eighteen days and was prolonged for many weeks afterwards: legitimacy gained through the daring act of protesting, a feeling of impotence among those who did not share their views, and a capacity to embody the legitimacy of a new order to come that their shouting, cries, slogans, body language and community life in Tahrir Square vindicated. The global media, and in particular Al Jazeera's large screen at Tahrir Square, convinced those who lived there that they were seen by the world and their legitimacy embodied a theatricality of its own through televisions around the world.

A new sense of "Tahrirization" comes to the fore: what made the demonstrators and those who lived there cling to a new identity made them afterwards unable to open up to a changing situation in the rest of Egyptian society and to perceive the eroding legitimacy of their attitudes and behavior patterns. The period when Tahrir Square became the symbolic embodiment of the Revolution was also the beginning of its decline in terms of empathy toward the rest of the society. The mainly young "netizens," who wanted social, political and economic change, did not see the degrading situation of an embattled economy based in a large part on tourism that was receding due to the troubles and instability. They were unable to perceive their own gradual loss of legitimacy in the eyes of other citizens. The "real society" was undergoing a deep economic and political crisis, while the so-called Tahrir Square youth became more and more estranged from the daily problems of society.

What once was the theater of the majority's will for change gradually became the venue where the divide became obvious: on the one hand, the radicalized actors of a mythicized community embodied in the youth of Tahrir Square, and on the other hand, a society that was undergoing disillusion and disenchantment with revolutionary ideals. The young minority were determined to preserve the ideal of a utopian community,

and Tahrir Square turned into a sectarian brotherhood of puritanical believers. The language of the Tahrir Square youth and their mindset was metapolitical, humanitarian or ethical. They harbored a moral attitude toward society, wishing to build up a close-knit community based on ethics rather than politics. Many decades of corrupt and populist leaders had induced a deep distrust toward politics as such. Contrary to classical revolutions, the Tahrir Square youth were not "politicized" but aimed at a metapolitical order that would embody morality and achieve social goals by virtue rather than through the new institutions and political parties that would emerge as a result of the overthrow of the authoritarian government.

The rupture of Tahrir Square youth from the rest of the society resulted from a degrading economy, political instability, and an opaque future, inducing a radical rejection of the revolutionary actors by many citizens who yearned for political stability and economic recovery. The military coup that put an end to the government was in part against the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) government that did not have any project for society except the progressive infiltration of the state by the MB apparatus, and in part against the Tahrir Square youth who had blocked the political situation by their ethereal views and their intransigence toward real politics.

Fragile Affects in the Egyptian Revolution

The so-called January 25 Revolution in Egypt was decisive in making explicit what had been implicit in the daily life of many ordinary citizens: the feeling that the Mubarak government had trampled their dignity. This situation was expressed in a word that found wide currency in Egypt and beyond it, in the Arab world, namely *hogra* (contempt): the state was contemptuous of its citizens and people endured it due to their fear, resistance (*muqawama*) being felt as impossible before the revolution. Demonstrations, both by imitation (Tunisia sent the message through its revolution in December 2010) and also by a feeling of being sick and tired, began in Egypt. Helplessness and silent acceptance of contempt were overcome by the sheer social action of protesting in the public sphere. The demonstrations created new social ties that overcame fear. But contrary to the past, when surpassing fear meant exerting "legitimate violence" against the former regime through a logic of honor and counterhumilia-tion, this time dignity was involved in challenging the state's contempt. This notion, meaning inalienable rights of citizens who collectively

constitute the sovereign people, was new in the Muslim world, a new culture of pluralism. The notion has religious precedents. In the Quran, we find: "And indeed We have honored ['dignified': *karramna*, the same root as *karam*, *karamah*, (dignity)] the Children of Adam, and We [...] have preferred them to many of those whom We have created with a marked preference" (Night Trip, verse 70). In this verse, God dignified Adam's offspring by giving them *karamah*, granting them prominence over the other creatures.

The current meaning of *karamah*, the dignity of a person as a citizen, is related to the individuation process and the recognition of a person as a judicial entity and, even more, an awareness of the inviolable nature of a person that should be recognized in his or her inalienable rights. Human rights groups in the Arab world now christen themselves *karamah*, such as the Alkarama for Human Rights, which denounced and publicized infringements on human rights.

Dignity can be distinguished from traditional honor, which was constantly brandished in the nationalist and Islamist movements in the twentieth century and by autocratic governments claiming that their honor was trampled upon by Western imperialism (nationalists), by the Crusaders (Islamists), and by internal enemies (both nationalists and Islamists). Honor is closely related to sexuality and metaphoric male ascendancy, assumed by the government in societies whose "honor" (*namus, irdh,* denoting the sexual integrity of women) has to be preserved by the state against internal and external devilish adversaries. Arab dictatorships mobilized this sense of threatened honor in order to deny dignity to their citizens.

The Egyptian Revolution at its inception replaced the logic of honor with that of dignity. Honor is, in its nationalist and Islamist embodiment, prone to see violence as necessary for the accomplishment of the community's goals and even desirable. Dignity is intent on preserving peace by avoiding violence. Honor entails dishonor as an irretrievable consequence if the offended honor is not followed by violence. The recurring theme in the movements of 2011 was *selmiyah* (peacefulness, nonviolence) rather than the Islamist cry for vengeance, inciting the people to seek revenge in order to preserve their national or religious honor.

The expressions related to honor and face actually exist in Arabic (and Persian) and are not mere idiomatic English translations. Dignity avoids the face-saving or face-losing dichotomy, opting for a painful face-to-face meeting with the opponent or seductive nonviolence toward the enemy, not fearing to be dishonored by showing one's flexibility and reflexivity. Honor in its face-losing and face-saving versions is incommensurable with dignity

as an attitude based on the autonomy of the individual and mutual respect, especially between the government and the "governed" (Khosrokhavar 2012).

Another feature of honor is that it responds to humiliation through a violent counterhumiliating posture, in need of an aggressive crescendo to prove to oneself one's capacity for "saving face." The humiliation issue is of the utmost significance. Dignity does not mean that humiliation is not felt; it signifies that one is able to master humiliation and not allow the logic of wounded honor to take hold of one for the sake of revenge (Scheff 1994).

Dignity makes possible empathy with others, not only those who belong to the same society, but distant others, through genuine feeling of relatedness through the bond of sheer humanity, which is a public sphere extended to the world in a symbolic way. That is what happened in the first months of the revolution in Tahrir Square. Islamist movements in Egypt wanted world public opinion to witness their strength and determination. A middle-aged Salafist told me:

> What we want is to be taken into account. For me, these people at Tahrir Square are miscreants, they are not genuine Muslims. I do not believe that the West has sympathy toward us. They are secular; this is their religion. What we want is a Muslim society and they don't want it. My view is that we should show strength. People at Tahrir Square act as if they were the entire Egypt.

At Tahrir Square, people believed that they could share with world public opinion their own saga and benefit from the world's sympathy. Socialization at Tahrir Square created in a fragile manner the prerequisite for an open society based on "home-grown" values related to the Arab language (poetry, music, painting playing with the Arabic characters) and democracy, this time not as an imported item from the West but as an ingredient in Egyptian identity.

Subjectivation meant acting according to emotions in a predicament marked by the hostility of external forces and the necessity to build up a new "togetherness" based on mutual respect: women, religious minorities, and secular people were respected, and enthusiasm for a new society was blended with the concrete necessities of daily life in a manner that preserved togetherness for many weeks. Subjectivation made it possible to cope with a hostile environment outside the community and to preserve the coherence of the new "would-be community" in a manner that put the ideal side by side with the real. Tensions were neutralized through irony and

the moments of inaction were filled with music, theater, reading poems and organizing the concrete life of the community (providing medicine to those who had health problems, organizing meals, taking care of those who slept there at night). At Tahrir Square, as Charles Tripp puts it "Foodstalls had sprung up, as had medical stations, debating circles, tents and shelters for those who stayed there the night – one labelled 'Freedom Motel' in Arabic and English" (Tripp 2013).

Violence as a Sign of Antagonistic Subjectivities

After the revolution, street violence in different forms spread to many Egyptian towns and cities, an almost daily experience for many revolutionaries. The MB did not show any real capacity to cope with a tense post-revolutionary predicament where expectations were high and the capacity of the political system and the economy to cope with them were at the edge.

During the revolution proper (January 2011), violence was lived as coming from the Mubarak regime and when the militia (*baltagia*) attacked people, people defended themselves, sometimes using "counterviolence" but not taking the initiative to exert violence. The mood was toward irony, dialogue and affective consensus to oust Mubarak. The nature of violence changed during the period when the army took power in order to prepare for the elections. Violence against the Copts but also army violence (or inaction) against those who were violent, the mob, the remnants of the old regime (*fulul*) became a reality of daily life in contrast to the ideals of nonviolence during the January 25 Revolution. After the election of Morsi, violence became more pervasive, primordially not quantitatively but qualitatively, through the disappointment and even despair of the people, particularly the Tahrir Square people or those who had shared their utopia throughout Egypt. In all these processes the subjectivation of violence played a major role: the election of Morsi and the daily demonstrations and protest movements in many parts of Egypt that brought tourism to a halt progressively put an end to the feeling of violence as a *transitory* phenomenon. For many people it became a proof that the revolution had gone wrong. A member of the Tamarrod movement that put an end to Morsi's presidency in conjunction with the army and many other prominent people (Ahmed al-Tayyeb the head of the Al Azhar, the Coptic Pope Tawadros, the Salafi Nur Party) said of the large demonstrations that put an end to Morsi's reign by a popular army putsch:

> During the [January 25] Revolution we believed that the departure of Mubarak would put an end to violence and chaos. Then the army assured the transition up to the elections under Marshal Tantawi. Morsi was elected and he tried to "brotherize" [*ikhwanah*] Egyptian society by putting his people into the major posts in the state. He was seeking to put an end to diversity by imposing Muslim Brotherhood. They did not even know how to govern and violence and disorder became paramount. They had to go for the order to be restored. Otherwise Egypt would not have survived and violence would have spread to all aspects of our daily life. (Interview, Cairo, January 2014)

Violence can also be understood as a show of "body politics" where no negotiated solution or institutionalized politics is in sight. In Egypt this body politics became a daily experience between the army, the Tahrir Square youth, the MB supporters, and the security forces. Ideology plays a lesser role than "street politics" grounded in hatred of each other and social tension caused by the incompatibility between moods, emotions and their articulation to the logic of interests: the opposition to the Morsi government became an "existential" dimension of those who believed that the MB was trying to swallow, even devour society and impose its version of Islam on the body social. Dignity was inflamed as opposition to Morsi by large parts of Egyptian society, giving rise to the protest movement Tamarrod a few months before the military coup, backed by a large part of the Egyptian society, at least in major cities.

Violence against Women

Women's fate was related to the changing situation in the Egyptian Revolution. Moods and emotions were consistent at the outset between men and women but a rift opened after Morsi's election and the cooling of the initial enthusiasm. On the whole, during the effervescent period at Tahrir Square in Cairo and to a lesser degree in Alexandria, the effusive atmosphere covered up gendered differences, at least among secular youth. Emotions by women and toward them by men can show the change within the "moodology" of the Egyptian Revolution, as a limited case for a more general "moodology" inspired by a sociology of emotions and social action. In Egypt, Asma Mahfouz became one of the few street leaders, a group that included primarily men even before the protest movement that led to the overthrow of Mubarak in January 2011. During the revolution she was active

and was regarded as a protest leader at least as much as she was perceived as a woman first. The fact that many men accepted her prominence tells much about the changes the mood brought about by the revolution. However, this change was as fragile as the "moods" that were part and parcel of it. Once the subjectivation process was brought to a halt, the blurring of lines between men and women was also questioned.

Up to the overthrow of Mubarak's autocratic government, protest was dominated by the "Tahrir Square youth" type of revolutionary: egalitarian, mostly secular and socially tolerant. Muslims showed their tolerance by celebrating their prayers next to the Christians, who were celebrating theirs. Women more or less mingled with men and their mood was that of egalitarian social actors defending a view of the "self" and "others" based on an implicit gender equality. They shared with men the same aspiration toward a democratic regime, and during this period everyone's preoccupation was how to deal with a threatening authoritarian regime.

In the second period, from the overthrow of Mubarak to the military coup, there was a dramatic change: the Salafis seriously threatened the emancipation of women. The latter's number in the parliament dwindled in Egypt to less than 2 percent in the November 2011 elections. These are of course two distinct processes, one is about grassroots social pressure, the other one about electoral representation, but the incapacity to bridge subjectivation to political representation is well illustrated by them.

The gap between the two periods and the marginalization of most of the revolutionary actors in the ensuing political process induced the disarray of the "Tahrir Square youth" type of agents, including women. The democratic dimension of the Egyptian Revolution was overshadowed by the emergence of new actors and by the marginalization of the "revolutionary youth" who pushed toward opening up the mores and the recognition of women's rights as full-fledged citizens. The frustration led in Egypt to the military coup, with the assistance and approval (at least at the beginning) of part of the Tahrir Square youth, secular women being their staunch supporters.

The Tahrir Square youth's lack of political organization pushed them toward the sidelines after the ousting of both former regimes. They were marginalized by the fundamentalist (Salafi) and Islamist (Muslim Brotherhood) actors, who were far more organized and able to mobilize their social basis for the polls. The scattered votes of the secular and progressive revolutionaries and their inability to voice their views in a unified manner through new political parties made them vulnerable, women being the most fragile social actors among them. Tahrir Square youth were inclined to reject politics as "filthy" and they preferred moral attitudes to political

ones. Revolutionary women shared these characteristics to an even higher degree. They were less preoccupied with their own lot than with that of the revolution proper and they did not care about creating new types of social organizations that would defend them as women from the Islamist political organizations. The result was the marginalization of revolutionary men and women in the second period of the Arab revolutions. The army as an institution had an antifeminist attitude and did not defend women against traditionalists who rejected their claims for equality. A feminist told me in March 2013, few months before the overthrow of Morsi:

> We have had three enemies: the MB, the Salafis and the army. They hate us for different reasons. The army is against us because we put into question the patriarchal order that supports them and to which they owe their clout. They do everything to humiliate us, they believe that we are prostitutes, that we question the social order and, therefore, that we are subversive. They also believe that we are part of a conspiracy by the West to undermine their power and the proof is that we are supported by the international media. I believe that shaking the patriarchal family and order will shake their supremacy and at least in that respect they are right. But many women do not understand our actions and side with traditionalists. This is our drama.

Secular authoritarian governments in the region had introduced legal norms that assured women more equality in families, inheritance, and divorce, making polygamy more difficult. But this was done by the governments, not by women as social actors. When it came to defend the January 25 Revolution, with few notable exceptions, women did not make feminist claims, mostly in order not to weaken a fragile revolutionary movement but partly due to their own lack of commitment to feminism, regarded as a Western attitude.

The division between "Islamist feminists" and "secular feminists" also undermined the cause of women. The Morsi government used this dissension to undercut women's action: when secular women asked for equal rights, the Islamists brandished the complementary gender rights that were in many cases a disguised form of inequality. But Islamist women argued that the complementary issue made change less brutal and men were thus less afraid since it was expressed through an Islamic idiom. In Egypt, secular women contributed to the military coup against the Morsi government, securing a kind of legal equality with men through the new constitution. But the advent of the military was a bad omen for independent political

organizations, the women's cause becoming marginalized in the face of the formidable repression that paralyzed civil society.

Women were present not only as foot soldiers, but also as leading figures (Naib 2011). Organizationally, however, they were weak and had no say in political matters, due to their lack of close ties with political parties that might defend their cause. Individually strong, collectively weak, the new generation of women was at best fragile in the political aftermath of the Arab Spring, although they were highly visible and conscious of their revolutionary role in bringing down autocracy in the initial street protests.

The scarcity of women as efficient activists in the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular (with the exception of Tunisia), is related to patriarchal prejudices, but also to their own inability to build up prominence within political structures and parties. Political leaders do not view them as assets to defend (Al-Malki 2012), since they have not been collectively active within associations and political groupings on the political scene. The number of women in the parliament dwindled after the revolution, and women felt they were losing their gains in legal equality at the hands of the Islamists. Still, there were a few exceptions and a beginning of self-awareness that might bear its fruits in the future (Eriksen 2011).

Violence against women began before the overthrow of the old regime. Women were molested by the regime's thugs (*baltajiya*), the army submitted them to virginity tests (Ortiz 2011), and female journalists were mistreated in order to intimidate them, be they from the diaspora or from Egypt. In June 2011, the popular writer Mona Eltahawy brought the issue to light as part of a strategy by the military to prevent women from participating in protest. The case of Samira Ibrahim, the 25-year-old Egyptian human rights activist, became widely known after she filed a legal case against the military. In reaction to the violence against them, women demonstrated, in particular in Cairo, close to Tahrir Square, against military rule and the harsh treatment of female protesters by the security forces. Many men joined them on December 20, 2011 (Johnson and Harding 2011).

In the eyes of the feminist Andrea Khalil,

In the context of the Arab Spring, popular pressures have been applied to the new governments by a wide range of groups of women whose opinions are redefining how constitutional and legal language treats gender in newly debated definitions of national identity. This shift in the women's rights question from state-defined action to atomized forms of cyber activism and street action is characteristic of the broader shifts in North African popular politics that culminated in the Arab Spring. (Khalil 2014)

This mode of subjectivation, like the one of the Tahrir Square people, had a large impact at the beginning of the revolution. But once Mubarak was removed, it could not be a substitute for politics. Subjectivity was locked in a confined space like Tahrir Square, leaving the political field to the others. It became synonymous with depoliticization.

After the revolution, Salafis pushed to exclude women from the public sphere. Women Salafis became involved in promoting Sharia (Islamic law) and putting pressure on those women who asked for gender equality, tacitly approving violence against activist women. In the mobilization by Tamarrod and the opposition political parties against Morsi's presidency in 2013, women played a significant role, but they were unable to convert this into political clout. They were overawed by the global movement against Morsi, partly divided between Islamists and secular, dependent on their families, and unable to build up autonomous feminist groups with the exception of small groups of secular women.

Another factor favoring violence against women was their massive appearance in the public sphere during the Arab revolutions. Since Salafis and traditionalists became politicized as well and sought to operate in the same public sphere, their first acts of self-vindication were violence against women who "dared" dispute their primacy by breaking down the barriers with men. Their violence took varied forms, physical, psychological, and moral. The army too, was keen to send women back to their homes in order to violently dispute with men the hegemony in the public sphere. Women activists were troublemakers who disputed the gender frontiers and therefore challenged male tradition.

Postrevolutionary male actors, with the exception of the Tahrir Square youth, usually embraced the reassignment of women to a less visible place, so as to exclusively occupy for themselves the public sphere and give their hegemony a symbolic basis. In Egypt, virginity tests against women, their rape, their mistreatment during and after the demonstrations, all these actions had a common denominator: pushing women back into the private sphere and restoring the old order, threatened by women's meteoric emergence in Tahrir Square.

All in all, in the "subjective civil sphere" that was built at Tahrir Square, women acted individually and no explicit feminist attitude emerged that could have been institutionalized. They were regarded by the military as wanton and by the Islamists as lewd, having spent time at Tahrir Square, sometimes unaccompanied by a male relative. They were also taken for transgressors as long as they stayed in the public sphere, their long participation signaling their unreliability as submissive females.

Subjectivities of Governmental Violence

Accurately or not, secular people in Egypt believed they were the main actors of the revolutionary wave that overthrew the Mubarak regime. This perception was challenged when they lost the first parliamentary elections to the Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood and, to a lesser degree, the Salafis), in November 2011 and January 2012.

The Freedom and Justice Party (affiliated with the MB) obtained 37.5 percent of the votes, the Al-Nour Party (Salafis) 27.8 percent, and the rest was split among numerous political parties, some belonging to the secular revolutionary trend. The feeling of "symbolic violence" was strong from the moment the Muslim Brotherhood held the majority in parliament and was further intensified with the election of Morsi as president. After Morsi's proposal for a new constitution which from a secular viewpoint betrayed the revolution's ideals, violence against MB became one of the constant features of street protests. In Alexandria, at the end of March 2013, demonstrations protested against the government's crackdown on freedom and mistreatment of opposition activists. In Sidi Gabi, a district in Alexandria, the clashes ended with the two sides throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at each other. On the evening of Friday, March 29, 2013, dozens of protesters skirmished with security forces at the MB headquarters in Zagazig district of Alexandria. Protesters marched to the building, but a large number of MB sympathizers and members were stationed there to protect it.

The movement against President Morsi and the MB radicalized gradually. Also on March 29, a small number of activists marched from Tahrir Square to the High Court in the late afternoon, demanding the fall of Morsi, the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the dismissal of Prosecutor General Talaat Abdallah. At the High Court, altercations broke out when some protesters began chanting for army rule: "The army is ours, the supreme guide [of the MB] is not." Other demonstrators objected to the chants.

Central Security Forces were deployed to the High Court's main lobby in mid-afternoon, reinforcing the already heavy security presence in place since the morning. Hundreds of demonstrators continued to flock to the area, assembling in front of the prosecutor general's office in the court complex. Dozens of protesters had gathered outside the High Court earlier on Friday afternoon in preparation for a protest they called, "We are not to be intimidated." They chanted, "We will not go, he [Morsi] shall go," "The people want to bring down the regime," "I am not a coward, I am not a [Muslim] Brother," "Morsi, leave!" and "Secular, secular – we do not want a Brotherhood [state]" (Egypt Independent 2013). Thus opposition to the Muslim

Brotherhood, President Morsi, and the Islamists by secular forces blended into a single protest movement that ended up with a huge demonstration in July 2013 and gave the opportunity to the army to mount its military coup.

Representatives of twelve youth groups met on Tuesday, March 26, 2013, at the Youth for Justice and Liberty movement headquarters to discuss their Friday plans. They announced that they would perform Friday prayers outside the prosecutor general's office at the High Court in Cairo. They demanded the dismissal of Prosecutor General Talaat Abdallah, Justice Minister Ahmed Mekki, and Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim, after Abdallah issued arrest warrants for five activists accused of inciting clashes near the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in Moqattam the week before. They also called for the public prosecutor to summon Brotherhood members involved in violent incidents around Moqattam and the Ettehadiya President Palace, and accused the judiciary of bias and unfairness. Radicalization of the secular and leftist political parties demanding an end to the president's rule and their direct confrontation with the security forces in the name of the revolutionary ideals frequently ended in physical violence.

Violence became the expression of post-revolutionary impatience and radicalism: impatience with the slowness of change, with the nonresponsive attitude of the MB hierarchy and government, with the economic downturn, mainly due to the political instability and social unrest that frightened the tourists. A conspiracy vision of social and political relations became paramount. The uncompromising attitude of the Morsi government was largely shared by the political opposition, the government nominating the members of the MB, since the others refused to accept the posts. Lack of mutual confidence due to the long periods of authoritarian regimes in Egypt but also, in consequence of revolutionary radicalization, made street violence almost inevitable (in particular by groups like the Ultras, made up of football fans, and the Black Bloc, an organization with extreme left leanings). The frontal opposition between the secular and the religious added up to the conflict: each side suspected the other of following hidden agendas. At the first anniversary of the January 25 Revolution, the rupture between the two worldviews was consummated: the time of compromise was over, street violence was becoming common currency, and active disobedience toward the government by the bureaucracy, a fait accompli. Mutual disrespect made toleration impossible, each case giving added arguments for each side to vehemently reject the other. Disrespect for the "rules" became an almost permanent feature of the demonstrations, as security forces acted more or less arbitrarily toward them, bouncing between the sheer absence of police forces and the disproportionate repression of the protesters. The contrast with the mood at Tahrir Square is immense.

Conclusion

One major goal of the Egyptian Revolution was peacefulness or lack of violence (*selmiyah*). After the revolution, the combination of the Islamists' electoral victories and the inability of the new political actors to reach a compromise resulted in mutual distrust and demonization, culminating in a military coup. There was a growing sense of impatience with the political stalemate, and Morsi's inept and sometimes arrogant style of government pushed the opposition toward radicalization. A new attitude among many opposition groups prevailed, regarding violence against the government as legitimate. Some revolutionary youth engaged in street violence that became endemic in some cities. Violence became even bloodier with the military coup, with the prospect of a peaceful transition to democracy dimming after the overthrow of the first democratically elected president, Morsi.

At the beginning of the Egyptian Revolution, almost everywhere dignity of the citizen (*karamah*) and nonviolence (*selmiyah*) were the two inseparable notions distinguishing it from the nationalist and Islamist uprisings of the past. But dignity and nonviolence were part of the new subjectivation process that was based on affects, moods, feelings and emotions. All of these ingredients are vital to a social movement but they also are fragile by nature. The evolution of the Egyptian Revolution challenged the dignity of the citizen, with violence emerging as the only appropriate response to the MB government's repression and ineptitude. The Morsi government was insensitive to consensus. The revolutionary youths' impatience was also detrimental to the preservation of dignity since it promoted violent street action that in turn undermined toleration and politics according to the supremacy of the law. Dignity was divorced from nonviolence, disrupting social dialogue. The military coup opened a chasm between dignity and nonviolence, each side begrudging the other's violence. The "dignity revolution" in Egypt ended tragically, the major notions around which they evolved being challenged by the street violence and the coup d'état (Tripp 2013).

Revolutions are venues for social and economic struggles. But they are also the theater for moods, emotions, heightened subjectivity – in one word, subjectivation. Violence developed out of the clash between many groups, but via impatience, effervescence, the revolutionary temperament and intransigence, as well as partisan and sectarian interests (the MB, the Salafıs, the army, the Tahrir Square youth, and so on). What was decisive in this revolution was much less economic issues for the new social actors at Tahrir Square (they had their significance, though for those who suffered economic hardship through social instability, resulting in the decrease in tourists) than subjectivation

issues based on the denial of dignity and state violence that refused genuine citizenship status based on political rights to the new generations. By holding to the logic of subjectivation without taking into account the social and economic hardship resulting from the political crisis, the people of Tahrir Square became blind toward the aspirations of society at large (more economic and political stability, even at the cost of political freedom). The emotions and antagonism toward the opponents made the Tahrir Square youth and the others irreconcilable, the final solution being a popular military coup that brought back authoritarianism even more repressive than Mubarak's.

After five years of turmoil and repression, violence against the activists by the military and the government that took power after the military coup in July 2013 has become a daily experience for many netizens who restrict their activities to social media and who find themselves abroad, in prison, or in political quarantine. In a disillusioned society where mobilization has lost its appeal, the return to embittered fear and apathy has gained momentum and state repression has become the worst in decades. At the same time, it is a period of deep crisis for the Muslim Brotherhood, exposed to the most violent repression in its history. Social media have become the venue through which resistance to the military regime keeps going. In order to have another political uprising, a new generation is needed to invent new ways of acting socially and politically in order to shake off political repression.

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Conclusion

Unruly Protest

Charles Kurzman

Near the shore of the Khaleej, outside a conference hall, I lingered after dinner with a group of Arab professionals. They had come from across the region, some for the week and some for good. They read multiple daily newspapers and could lecture confidently on political economy and modern Arab history.

Naturally, conversation turned to the so-called Arab Spring. "We Arabs will not put up with corruption and mismanagement forever," one of my companions said. I am paraphrasing from memory. "Look at the poverty. Look at the inequality. Look at the waste of natural resources, of human resources. Eventually, we had to say: Enough!"

"But there is just as much waste and corruption in Algeria and Jordan as in Tunisia and Egypt," another companion countered. Algeria and Jordan had relatively small-scale protests in 2011 that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and King Abdullah weathered easily, while Tunisia and Egypt experienced mass uprisings that ousted presidents Zine El-Abdine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. "Ben Ali and Mubarak fell because France and the United States wanted them out, but Bouteflika and Abdullah made deals with the West and were allowed to stay in power."

In my experience in the Middle East, reference to Western machinations is normally a conversation-stopper. But this evening, another companion took exception. "Tahrir Square wasn't a Western conspiracy," she said, referring to the mass sit-in in Cairo. "All that America did for us was to invent Facebook and Twitter, which Egyptians used to make Tahrir Square on their own, to organize food and medics and reinforcements."

Although these were not social scientists by training, their conversation was as social-scientific as any I've overheard at academic conferences. Without scholarly citations, these "lay" social scientists juxtaposed theories

of socioeconomic and political grievances, international pressures, and new media effects. They could elaborate, when pressed, with evidence from their core cases and extrapolate to contrasting cases within the region. They were intimidatingly well-informed about the daily course of events and political alliances and betrayals.

As debate ran into the night, I began to see a consensus, notwithstanding their theoretical differences: the uprisings of the Arab Spring were both inevitable and doomed. They had to happen, and they had to fail.

Many full-time social scientists have come to similar conclusions. The Arab Spring has generated a small industry of *post facto* just-so accounts. Even when couched in the language of probabilities, social-scientific causality and explanation tease us with hints of determinism. Like other revolutions, the Arab Spring rose and fell "because." Indeed, many social scientists see the quest for "becauses" as their primary mission.

Social scientists are particularly drawn to explain surprisingly shiny objects, but we are not the only ones. A half-century ago, ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel (1967) proposed that making sense of difficult, unexpected behavior is one of the main tasks of social interaction. Similarly, Judith Butler (1999) argued that gender nonconformism attracts special scrutiny and judgment as a violation of the expectation of dominant gender norms. At the macrolevel, too, Hendrik Vollmer (2013) suggests that disruptions prompt movements to contain and normalize the unanticipated. Most social scientists are human, too, and we get professional brownie points for bringing the wildest-looking phenomena into the comforting corral of "because."

I've been skeptical of this explanatory mission for some time. It seems to me that some moments are less easily tamed than others by social science's causal models. Revolutions and other forms of nonroutine behavior, in particular, disrupt prior patterns of interaction, erasing the causal inferences that apply to routine action (with apologies for self-citation, readers who are interested in this argument can find fuller versions in Kurzman, 2004a, 2004b).

Let me be clear – I am not saying that all human behavior is inexplicable. A colleague once challenged me to set scope conditions: If revolutions cannot be tamed by causal models, what else did I imagine was unpredictable? Isn't rush hour traffic fairly predictable, for example? I agree – I dread rush hour traffic as much as the next person, and that dread is based on a causal model that presumes a certain predictability. My point is that the predictability of some human behavior does not imply the predictability of all human behavior. I do not know where the scope conditions lie, but I suggest that those boundaries are fascinating to study: at what points do behaviors become "unruly"?

By "unruly," I mean collective actions that do not obey the rules of social behavior, and that do not obey the rules of social science (with apologies to Bartley [2014], from whom I borrowed the terms "ruliness"/"unruliness" but not his definitions). It is unruly to stand in front of armored personnel carriers and demand that the commander in chief resign? It is unruly to hold up a sign demanding freedom, in a place where people who have held up signs demanding freedom often lose their freedom as a result? These actions are not necessarily raucous or disruptive – although they may be – but they are unruly in the sense that they violate the norms of routine behavior. To the extent that such actions also flout the expectations of social-scientific models, they are unruly in a second sense: they appear at moments the models did not predict, they spread in places the models treated as unlikely, and they disappear just as updated models are developed to predict them retroactively.

The Arab Spring was unruly in both senses. It erupted in defiance of authoritarian political systems that had suppressed and manipulated political mobilization for a generation or more, and it shocked social-scientific experts who considered these systems relatively stable. Arab publics were never perfectly quiescent, and the Arab Spring had its roots in the region's long-standing traditions of protest (Chalcraft 2016; Thompson 2013) – but these protests were definitely against the rules. They appeared sporadically and were repressed harshly. The uprisings of the Arab Spring were unruly in the second sense as well – they did not fit the patterns that social-scientific theories led us to expect. They did not occur in countries with especially high usage of new media technologies, or in places where inequality was the most severe, or in societies with the greatest youth unemployment, to pick several potential theories (a variety of data sources are reviewed in Kurzman 2012).

Lay social science, like my conversation by the Khaleej, may allow itself to grab at evidence that fits its theories, and to push aside evidence that disconfirms them. Professional social science, by contrast, makes a commitment to examine data more systematically. The data may involve numbers or texts or fieldwork, but regardless of form the evidence brings us closer to our subjects. My experience with all of these forms of evidence is that the more data we analyze and the closer we get to our subjects, the more unruly they come to seem. Individual trajectories stand out more clearly against general patterns. "Deviant cases" (a pejorative-sounding phrase in comparative-historical analysis) and "outliers" (a dismissive-sounding term in statistical analysis) come into focus. Especially in times of turmoil, it gets harder to generalize about large-scale processes when you are familiar with the variety of smaller-scale experiences. Inevitably, social science shepherds the evidence into a meaningful narrative. All humans do this, faced with a

potentially paralyzing overabundance of sensory information (Feyerabend 1999). But let us not lose our sense of wonder at the unruliness that attracted our attention in the first place.

Another contribution that professional social science offers to well-informed lay social science, I think, is to study the production and reproduction of institutions. Lay social science generally takes institutions for granted – it uses terms like "state" and "nation" as unproblematically real, while much of the social science that I appreciate the most explores how these come to be experienced as real, and how that experience makes us act as though they were real, and in so doing makes them real.

Race provides a crucial example of this process. "Race" as we understand it today was invented in the eighteenth century – previously, the term could refer to any group of people claiming common descent and cultural solidarity, such as the Germanic race or the Gallic race. In the eighteenth century, however, Europeans began to claim that they constituted a single race, alongside Africans, Americans, Asians, and – according to Karl Linnaeus (Linnaei 1758, 21-22), one of the inventors of biological taxonomy – the feral and monstrous human races. Europeans came to call themselves Caucasians, because they considered the people of the Caucasus to be the most beautiful people in the world (Painter 2010, 72-90). This new conception of race was epically unruly – both in the sense that it provoked widespread resistance and had to be repeatedly enforced through the application of violence, and in the sense that it was incapable of accounting for evidence that, for most characteristics, humans varied more within each race than between them (Montagu 1942). Much of contemporary social science now treats race as an institution, not a biological category, and explores how this institution is reproduced, challenged, appropriated, and otherwise manipulated – denaturalizing a concept that lay social science too often treats as inherent and inevitable. Similar transformations have occurred in the study of the state, which is increasingly viewed as a multitude of arenas rather than a singular entity (Abrams 1988; Duyvendak and Jasper 2015); the nation, which is now viewed as a project rather than a people (Anderson 2006; Yuval-Davis 1997); and many other institutions. Unruly action, if widespread enough, may gel over time into "ruly" institutions.

The chapters in this volume illustrate this contribution. Instead of treating human experience as a product of large-scale institutional causes, they examine how individual experience mediates and produces the phenomena that come to be labeled as causes.

This intervention begins in the introduction by James Jasper and Frédéric Volpi, who challenge the concept of "groups." Lay social science, and much of

professional social science, treat groups as givens. Those approaches often explain behavior by membership in a group, the interests of the group, the resources or other characteristics of the group. For routine behaviors, when groups are stable and group membership is nonproblematic, such explanations may work. But in moments of protest and change, groups themselves may be the subject of conflict and negotiation. To capture the fluidity of collective identity, Jasper and Volpi replace the concept of groups with an alternative vocabulary of collective "players" (Duyvendak and Jasper 2015; Jasper and Duyvendak 2015). Players are "constantly shifting, dissolving, and recombining," in this view, echoing studies from decades ago that viewed collective identity as the product of mobilization rather than an explanation for mobilization (Melucci 1989; Gamson 1991). Players still risk being reified the way groups are often reified – we may refer to them by collective labels, as though they were single actors. But the new term highlights how players play – how they strategically engage other players, sometimes playing by the rules, sometimes breaking the rules. Through the concept of players, along with the allied concept of arenas, Jasper and Volpi offer new organizing principles for the field of social movement studies, refusing to reduce people to institutional determinants.

The subsequent chapters deconstruct other structural explanations. Causal models of diffusion are scrutinized in John Chalcraft's chapter on Arab "pirating" of models for revolt, for example. Chalcraft does not treat diffusion as automatic spillover or demonstration effects or political learning, which hide individual agency behind generic processes. Instead, he highlights the effort that some activists put into the consideration of which models to follow, debates over whether which of those models might apply locally, and what sorts of local alterations might be appropriate. His own appropriation of the concept of "piracy" signals a move closer to the lived experience of diffusion, and how that experience matters for diffusion.

Along different lines, Jillian Schwedler's chapter on rituals of protest in Jordan asks what to make of small demonstrations that did not "matter" in terms of public opinion or political change. She suggests that these protests may matter in a different sense, in that they may illustrate the rituals of encounter between state officials and their activist opponents, the oppositional identities that activists develop, and – more broadly – the persistence of protest that is not necessarily calculated to produce policy or regime change, contrary to rational-choice images of activists' strategic motivations. Schwedler locates herself at the protest: where she walked, among, in front of, or behind the activists and the security forces, shows how calmly ritualistic these encounters had become, and how different

protest felt when the *baltagiyya* militia was summoned, creating a more menacing atmosphere. Her methodological transparency allows us to follow the researcher as she engages with her subjects of study.

Wendy Pearlman's chapter focuses on another moment of change: the first days of what would later be called the Syrian uprising of 2011. The activists quoted in Pearlman's chapter tell us what it felt like (the fear, the excitement), how these feelings reflected the contours of state control (which buildings and which people were considered safe enough for risky conversations), and how those contours could reform in an instant when enough of one's neighbors decided they would not be intimidated by the prospect of coercion. From this perspective, state violence is not an abstract cause of obedience or revolt; it is a set of practices and threats that Syrians accepted, and then stopped accepting.

That moment of disobedience, when people stop accepting the institutions they have lived with for years, is shocking. We see the shock most clearly in Youssef El Chazli's chapter on activists in Alexandria, Egypt. On the morning of January 25, 2011, El Chazli writes, these activists – several dozen in all – had no idea that the demonstrations they had planned would draw hundreds of thousands of participants. "The numbers were incredible, unbelievable," one activist recalled. "We found ourselves in tears from the sight," another said. Their "maximal hope" had been to attract a thousand protestors, and they did not know what to do with the massive numbers that materialized. The crowds pushed passed police barriers, took up rude chants, and battled tear gas even after many activists had left the scene to regroup at a café. El Chazli does not argue that activist organization was unimportant – only that it did not "cause" the Egyptian uprising. It does not explain why hundreds of thousands of Egyptians suddenly decided to join in, which they had not done at the activists' previous protests.

Farhad Khosrokhavar's chapter examines the "effervescent community" that was forged among protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt. Contrary to cheery visions of cosmopolitan youth demanding liberties that they saw their peers enjoying in Europe and North America, Khosrokhavar argues that the emergent solidarity of Tahrir distanced elite protesters from their Egyptian compatriots. Activists claimed moral superiority over less-well-off communities that did not participate as actively in the uprising, Khosrokhavar suggests, and did not address their concerns about economic degradation and political instability. This divide reflected long-standing class divisions in Egyptian society, but was activated and dramatized through the act of protest itself.

These studies offer glimpses into the breakdown of old institutions, although "breakdown" sounds too impersonal. More than that, they offer glimpses into the breakdown of causal reasoning: activist organization and

state violence and protest ritual and diffusion are not "causes" or "explanations" in the social-scientific sense but rather aspects of the institutional environment that obsessed protesters and potential protesters. Their importance lies in how they were interpreted, and how those interpretations could shift.

Of course, revolutions don't change everything. Even at moments of maximal confusion and deinstitutionalization, when the future seems entirely up in the air, revolutionaries may tie their shoelaces the way they've always done. They may buy bread where they've always bought it and obey traffic signals and engage in much of their usual participation in the large-scale institutions that encompass their lives.

Most of the population is never directly engaged in the upheaval. Most people keep going to work, if they can, even if it means making special plans to avoid the sites of protest. Some of the population may be actively opposed to the revolution, looking to undermine it through their own protests or violence or other means. At the same time, global capitalism and geopolitics continue to seek advantages. All is not chaos.

So the question is not whether institutions all fail, but which ones. And that can't be known in the abstract, but only in the moment, through the ways in which people abandon some routines in order to protect others, or vice versa. The chapter by Frédéric Volpi in this volume offers an example of this process. The Salafis in Tunisia were a coalition comprised largely of activists who were willing to maintain the current political order, at least for the moment, in order to change popular values and particular government policies. They did not seek a total break with the past, but a selective one. Within the coalition, also, were revolutionaries who were willing to consider violence. They had a different set of calculations: breaking with their past (nonviolent) political practice would allow them to maintain their ideological purity and trigger a clash that they expected to usher in a new set of institutions. In Tunisia, as Volpi describes, the militants assassinated political figures and the entire coalition was banned. Elsewhere, by contrast, Salafis have refrained from violence (at least thus far) to pursue a more cautious strategy of incremental change, even if it that means painful compromises.

In early February 2011, I had my laptop open at a mandatory administrative meeting at my university in the United States, watching a live-stream of President Hosni Mubarak's speech on Egyptian television. Listening on earbuds and trying to ignore the meeting around me, I waited for Mubarak to acknowledge the massive protests against him and resign. The television feed had a split-screen for much of the speech, one side close in on Mubarak and the other side zoomed out on Tahrir Square, where thousands

of protesters were also watching the speech. As Mubarak kept talking, it became clear that he was not planning to resign.

It occurred to me that the history of Egypt at that moment depended on the decision-making of one deluded old man, who was gabbing away in front of a television camera while I watched. If he resigned, the history books would say that massive protests drove him from power in just over two weeks. If he refused to resign, then – who knew? (As it turned out, another old man – one of Mubarak's cronies – announced the president's resignation the next day.) On the other side of the split screen, I wondered about the response from the crowd in Tahrir Square, and from other Egyptians watching or listening to Mubarak's speech around the country. If anybody at Tahrir Square had responded with rage and pulled out a gun, or brought a bomb and set it off, we would have an entirely different narrative of the upheaval – no longer an unarmed movement but a violent insurrection, possibly even a terrorist campaign. All it would take is a small group to change the language we use for the entire mass event, in keeping with the one-drop definition of political violence. Nonviolence takes a village, but violence only takes a cell.

Contrasting paths, and the grand causal theories that social science stakes on the outcomes, rest on the actions of small groups whose minds are not typical of the population at large – most people wouldn't dream of setting off explosives or ordering thugs to beat people up, as the regime's top officials did, but those decisions matter tremendously for our accounts. To understand the divergent trajectories of protest, in Egypt and elsewhere, we must be prepared to operate at multiple scales at once: at the mass scale, to understand how institutions are produced by hundreds of thousands or more; at the intermediate scale, to understand how hundreds or thousands of people mobilize on behalf of particular goals and strategies; and at the micro scale, where a handful of individuals may throw off everybody else's plans with a dramatic intervention.

Social scientists who privilege the mass scale may dismiss small-scale disruptions as statistical noise in the signal, but for the people living through these periods of unrest, they may be the signal itself. These small-scale perturbations can come to define the historic moment. They may be the iconic feature that people latch on to as they work out which institutions are finished and which ones remain intact.

That, to me, is the value of this volume. It draws us into the experience of the Arab Spring, in all its hope and pain, taking the uncertainties of the moment as its object of study. The social-scientific lens of the researcher does not displace the lay social-science of the researched, who are also trying to make sense of the institutional changes they are party to, willingly or not.

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