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Five years after the Arab Spring

What happened?

Arab Network for the Study of Democracy

This publication is a research paper in a series of policy papers published by the Arab Network for the Study of Democracy, which seek to document and analyze the political developments in the countries of the Arab Middle East that have witnessed popular uprisings, assessing both their initial causes and the resultant changes and conflicts, five years later.

The Arab Network for the Study of Democracy is a non-governmental organization joining researchers and civil society activists from numerous Arab countries. The Network was founded in 2007 and has held citizen discussion forums and published issue guides to public discussions concerning issues of citizenship, electoral laws, unemployment, and political participation. The Network published an edited volume in 2014 entitled *"The Arab Spring": Revolutions for Deliverance from Authoritarianism*, comprised of case studies of the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria, as well as of the accompanying changes in Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan, in addition to chapters focusing respectively on the roles of women, young people, and both traditional and new social media in these events. The Network also publishes a newsletter documenting the political, social, and cultural conditions in the region, which can be subscribed to or read via the Network's website: **www.ademocracynet.com**

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Introduction

A wave of optimism was unleashed in late 2010 that the end was neigh for authoritarian regimes in the region. This wave came in the wake of the broad-based movements in the Arab world supporting revolutions for freedom and deliverance from authoritarianism, which began in Tunisia and Egypt and then came to Libya, Yemen, Syria, and the remaining Arab countries to varying degrees. Now, a wave of severe pessimism reigns over the region, following recent developments in most of these countries, with perhaps the sole exception of Tunisia.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to review in brief what occurred in these countries, with a focus on what has been accomplished as well as the barriers, obstacles, and challenges these countries have faced and continue to face during the process of democratic transition. This paper will also seek to explain recent developments, especially in terms of their negative effects on this process of moving toward democracy.

But first, it must be emphasized that what has happened so far is just the beginning of a process of liberation from authoritarianism. This does not mean that in all cases the transition process will proceed mechanistically or automatically toward building democracy. It likewise means that some of these countries may succeed while others fail or lag behind. However, a qualitative transformation has occurred with the revolutions for deliverance from authoritarianism, from which there is no return—no matter how long the transition periods last, and regardless of whether the process stalls, stumbles, or is even reversed by a temporary victory of counter-revolutionary forces. This conclusion comes not out of optimism of the will, or out of deterministic logic, but from the premise that the causes and the reasons for the outbreak of the revolution not only still exist, but also have both grown worse and increased in number. Furthermore, it follows that if these authoritarian regimes failed to convince this current generation, which rebelled against them, then the regimes will be even less capable of taming the next generation, which will have the inclination and the desire for even broader and more comprehensive change.[1]

Regardless of the many challenges and setbacks facing citizens demanding freedom and democracy, it must be noted that these uprisings led to the overthrow of the four heads of state in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, as well as to constitutional changes in these four countries plus Morocco and Jordan. This paper will review the outcomes in five Arab countries: a case of relative success in Tunisia, and four cases of failure in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and to a lesser extent Egypt—noting both the shared and the unique causes for the deterioration and decline of the democratization process in the latter cases. As a result, the review of developments within each of these countries over the past five years must be very brief, beginning first with the best case scenario: Tunisia.

[1] See the book by the Arab Network for the Study of Democracy, *"The Arab Spring": revolutions for deliverance from authoritarianism*, Hassan Krayem ed., Jeffrey D. Reger trans. (Beirut: L'orient des livres, 2014).

Tunisia

Over the past five years, Tunisia has lived through a very rich experience, if one filled with conflict during the democratic transition that followed the fall of the authoritarian regime, which had been headed by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who fled the country on 14 January 2011, after which Tunisia entered a period of change.[2]

The importance of the Tunisian experiment lies in the fact that it succeeded in a number of crucial areas: producing a constitution based on consensus, which won 93 percent of the vote; conducting democratic parliamentary elections that adopted proportional representation, which led to the representation of all parties and factions; and in conducting democratic presidential elections that brought a new president to power, in place of the president supported by the Islamist Ennahda (Renaissance) Movement. Additionally, a government inclusive of all parties was formed to manage crises and resolve them democratically and peacefully. All of this happened despite the presence of severe political polarization between an Islamist front led by Ennahda Movement and a secularist front led by Nida'a Tunis (Tunisia Appeal), and joined by leftist, nationalist supporters of the previous regime (especially those bearing the secularist tradition of the late President Habib Bourguiba) as well as influential civil society groups. Tunisia may be fortunate that its secular legacy, which has been deeply rooted for many decades, has helped the country to manage the political dispute with the Islamists successfully. It has propelled Ennahda Movement (which was moderate in essence) toward even greater moderation and involvement in the political process, which has in turn helped the moderates to deal with extremist movements by containing their influence and limiting their appeal, despite the continuing danger of terrorist operations.

In sum, there was a transition to democracy in Tunisia, with all five major parties represented in parliament. One key to this success was the existence of an active and influential civil society, at its head a tested and longstanding trade union movement (at its head the Tunisian General Labour Union), in addition to the professionals unions of employers such as the Tunisian Union of Industry and Commerce, as well as Tunisia's Bar Association, and the Tunisia League for Human Rights.[3]

The Tunisian experience gave greater hope to the possibility of the success of democratic transitions in other Arab countries; to the possibility of success in working with moderate Islamists within democratic institutions; and to the possibility of success in protecting such an experiment and associated social freedoms through the effective intervention of civil society. Tunisian civil society has spearheaded efforts to find potential settlements between the major political powers, which became sharply polarized during the two years from 2012 to 2014—a time span punctuated by politically motivated assassinations, violent demonstrations, and ideological clashes over various fundamental issues inevitably raised by the writing of a new constitution.

[2] Ahmed Karoud, "Tunisia, the freedom and dignity revolution," in *"The Arab Spring": revolutions for deliverance from Authoritarianism*, Hassan Krayem ed., Jeffrey D. Reger trans., (Beirut: L'orient des livres, 2014).

[3] Ahmed Karoud, "Does polarization pave the way for establishing a pluralistic system; or is it merely the prelude to ever-worsening power struggles?" Policy Papers (1), Arab Network for the Study of Democracy, January 2015.

Egypt

The experience of Egypt differed markedly from that of its counterpart in Tunisia. Whereas the Tunisian army remained neutral between the regime and the protesters (and the Tunisian regime thus relied exclusively on its security services in its attempt to repress the protest movement), the Egyptian military, which had held onto power tenaciously for decades, intervened in order to preserve its influence and control, until the Egyptian military regained power fully in 2013.

Initially, at the beginning of the events sparked by demonstrations in Egypt on 25 January 2011, the military did not intervene against the demonstrators. In fact, the army openly declared on 31 January that it would not fire on peaceful demonstrators. The military also hurried to abandon President Hosni Mubarak and force his resignation as protests escalated on 10 February 2011. On 13 February 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (abbreviated as SCAF) assumed power and announced the suspension of the 1971 constitution until the holding of elections and a referendum on a new constitution.

For the most part, military rule helped to manage the transitional period and create a dialogue that led to a mutual understanding between the military and Islamist forces, specifically the Muslim Brotherhood. Over the period of the first year, however, there were violent events with some frequency, which in no small part resulted from military rule. For example, more than 25 Coptic Christians were killed in a demonstration in front of the Maspero Building (headquarters of the official radio and television channels) on 9 October 2011. Likewise, clashes between the military and revolutionary young people around Tahrir Square and Mohammed Mahmoud Street led to the deaths of 42 protesters on 20 November 2011. And clashes with the army that took place directly in front of the headquarters of the council of Ministers of Egypt, in which the protestors objected to the SCAF's appointment of Kamal Ganzouri as prime minister (since he was seen as a holdover from the Mubarak era). These clashes led to the deaths of 17 people.

The army oversaw the parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2012 that led to landslide victories for the Islamists. In the parliamentary elections, the Muslim Brotherhood won 45 percent of the seats, and the Salafist *Hizb al-Nour* (Party of the Light) won 24 percent of seats. In the presidential elections, the withdrawal of the former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, in protest of the process's nondemocratic nature meant that the competition was limited to two choices: a symbol of the old guard in the form of Ahmed Shafiq, versus Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter won in the runoff by a narrow margin of just 51 percent of the vote.

During the period of Muslim Brotherhood rule, which lasted almost a year, conflict continued behind the scenes (and from time to time, erupted openly) between the military and the Brotherhood. The military was backed by the judiciary, opposition parties, the media, and a wide swath of Egyptians who feared Muslim Brotherhood rule. President Mohamed Morsi in particular and the Muslim Brotherhood in general compounded these fears by taking no interest in the widespread opposition generated by its mode of governance. Instead, the Muslim Brotherhood continued their practice of an exclusionary mode of rule and continued to send messages of their intent to assume full control over

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society, a process that became known as the "Brotherhoodization" of society.

Work on the constitution was suspended while the constitutional drafting committee was controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood. In the meantime, the military attempted via a supplementary constitutional declaration to restrict the powers of the president-elect (Morsi) and remove command of the military from presidential control.[4] However, President-Elect Morsi took on the judiciary over the issue of dissolving parliament and the legitimacy of the Shura Council. The judiciary found these actions to be illegitimate, meaning that the supplementary constitutional declaration was null and void and President Morsi backed off. However, Morsi forced the retirement of Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, chief of staff of the armed forces, as well as other senior military leaders, and appointed General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as the new chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces on 12 August 2012. Finally, on 22 November 2012, Morsi issued a new constitutional declaration, which granted him sweeping powers that safeguarded his decisions as well as the resolutions of the Constituent Assembly entrusted with amending the constitution. The Constituent Assembly ratified a draft of the constitution that was considered biased in favor of the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the objections of civil society groups and church leaders, on 30 November 2012. Although Morsi largely backed away from the broad powers granted to him in the face of pressure from the street and from the military, he nevertheless insisted on organizing a referendum on the constitution, which was held in two stages during 15-25 December

[4] The military council issued this supplementary constitutional declaration on 17 June 2012, which was before Morsi assumed the presidency on 30 June 2012.

2012 and gained the approval of 64 percent of voters.

In 2013, a number of organized mass movements began to take shape against President Morsi, demanding his resignation. The Tamarod (Rebellion) Movement gathered millions of signatures for petitions against Morsi, and conducted continuous demonstrations against him in front of the presidential palace. The judiciary declared the Shura Council illegitimate, and the Defense Minister and Commander-in-Chief al-Sisi declared that the military would intervene if internal strife occurred. Violent confrontations occurred in front of the presidential palace between demonstrators supporting Morsi and demonstrators opposing Morsi. On 30 June 2013, huge demonstrations erupted against Morsi, after which al-Sisi announced a deadline of two days for the major political forces to reach a solution; otherwise, he declared that the armed forces would create a roadmap and take the necessary measures to oversee its implementation. On 3 July 2013, the military decided, in agreement with a number of political forces opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood (among them religious leaders of the Coptic Church and al-Azhar), to remove President Morsi from power, stop work on the constitution, and call for an amended constitution, new presidential elections, and the appointment of a new government without the Muslim Brotherhood.

This coup, however, did not come about without a bloody, violent confrontation, which took place on 14 August 2013 when the military broke up a sit-in of the Muslim Brotherhood in Raba'a al-Adawaiyya and al-Nahda Squares, which resulted in hundreds killed and thousands injured.[5]

The Supreme Guide of Muslim Brotherhood Movement Mohammed Badie and deposed President Mohamed Morsi, among other senior leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, were arrested along with thousands of the movement's members. On 18 January 2015, the new Egyptian constitution was approved in a referendum with 98 percent support of the 20,613,000 voters. However, the return of the military to direct rule over Egypt ignited a violent conflict with Islamists that took the form of open war in the Sinai, terrorist attacks in all the cities of Egypt, and the targeted assassination of statesmen, which mark a return to the experience of Egypt in the 1990s. In addition, the space for freedoms has shrunk considerably as the Egyptian state has closed off spaces for expressing demands, such as Tahrir Square, to all but especially to young people. Many of the leaders of the youth protest movement who created and led the revolution in 2011 have been arrested and imprisoned. Media freedoms have declined, as the media has returned to playing the role it has been accustomed to for decades under authoritarian rule, as an official mouthpiece that follows the line set by the state and the military in the fight against terrorism.

Therefore, it can be said that the democratic transition has hit a stumbling block in Egypt, and the path of the transition has radically changed with the exclusion of the Islamists, whose participation was believed to be necessary in order both to contain them and to ensure the success of the democratic transformation. Neither the long history of the Muslim Brotherhood's repression by the military in Egypt nor the recent experience

[5] According to the Ministry of Health, these events led to the deaths of 578 people and injured more than 4,021 others. For more on these events see http://en.aswatmasriya.com.

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of the Brotherhood's decisions and policies while in power encouraged or facilitated the democratic transformation. In any case, the experience of recent years has been arduous and difficult for the military, the Muslim Brotherhood, and all Egyptians alike. That being said, the Egyptian experience further supports the argument that the state and its institutions cannot be restored from a security perspective alone. Instead, the process of state restoration must encompass all areas, including the provision of solutions to socioeconomic problems and democratic development in general.[6]

In conclusion, the Egyptian experience stripped away the Muslim Brotherhood Movement and showed their authoritarian tendency, and with more time this experience is going to strip away the corrosive nature of military rule on Egypt in general, and rectify its inability to provide real answers to the problems facing Egypt. Young people, who were not only the source of the vitality of the revolution but also did the hard work necessary to keep pace with the great revolutionary experiment that lasted three years, will return to the center of attention. In short, the Egyptian revolution could have continued and even succeeded, if not for the intervention of the military, which blocked this path in favor of a return to military control over the situation in Egypt.

[6] See the article in Arabic by Mohammad Shoman, "Four years on from the Egyptian revolution," *al-Hayat*, 28 January 2015.

Syria

Moving to the other cases of Syria, Libya, and Yemen, we find even more difficult experiences wherein the situations in these countries devolved to the point of state failure, which in some cases meant the collapse or disintegration of the state and its institutions.

The revolution in Syria has passed through a number of different stages. It began peacefully on 15 March 2011. Demonstrations erupted in several cities, Dara'a especially, on 18 March 2011, calling first for reform of the political system. Then, when the regime confronted these protests with extreme violence, the demand shifted to the fall of the regime. Hundreds of thousands of citizens participated in this movement, forming mass demonstrations in the major cities of Homs, Hama, Daraa, and hundreds of villages and towns. However, the extreme violence and willful killing of thousands of citizens, and the injuring and arresting of tens of thousands more, led to the gradual militarization of the revolution, beginning in September 2011. The process of militarization was further accelerated by the intervention of foreign powers. The revolution transformed into a violent, destructive military conflict and then into the civil war that continues today. In the meantime, extremist Islamist forces have not only seized control of wide swaths of Syria, but also have seized control of the conflict to a certain extent, since these groups are some of the most organized military actors.[7]

The situation has thereby shifted into one of open civil warfare, with entire regions uncontrolled by the regime that have then fallen under the control of rival factions with conflicting agendas. On the whole, the civilian opposition (which emerged in the form of the Syrian National Council in October 2011 and then in the form of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in 2013) has depended on military factions joined under the banner of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which has appeared weaker than the fundamentalist Islamist forces. The extremist Islamists have in turn fought against and weakened the FSA, which itself has neither received the requisite support from abroad to become a leading actor in the conflict nor even received support sufficient to enable it to continue fighting and recruiting successfully. Regional powers have instead pursued their own interests, which have often meant funding extremist groups. On their part, international powers have become terrified of any support, especially in the form of advanced weaponry, falling into the hands of extremist militants.

Both the regime and the opposition have been exhausted by the conflict, and the priorities of regional and international power have shifted after the rise of Da'ish,[8] whose control over major cities in Iraq such as Mosul and Anbar gave the impetus for an international coalition against terrorism to fight Da'ish in both Syria and Iraq. This alliance has adopted a long-term strategy, which has implicitly meant enormous suffering in the short-term for Iraq and Syria. Additionally, Al-Nusra (Victory) Front, a branch of al-Qaeda,

[7] Iyad Abdallah, "Syria: four years from the start of the revolution," Policy Papers (2), Arab Network for the Study of Democracy, May 2015. See also Ziad Majed, *Syrie, la révolution orpheline* (Paris: Acte Sud, 2014).

[8] Da'ish is the Arabic acronym for the organization now identifying itself as the Islamic State, previously known as the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham. Al-Sham has been alternately translated as either Greater Syria or the Levant, which has led to the emergence of the English acronyms ISIS and ISIL respectively.

has emerged along with Da'ish and extended its control over large tracts of Syrian territory and adopted a platform completely at odds with the program of the nationalist opposition. Al-Nusra has sometimes clashed with Da'ish and with the FSA at other times, despite also continuing to fight against the forces of the regime.

With the complete militarization of the conflict in Syria, the regime has bought additional time. The regime has long attempted to justify its use of excessive force by invoking the pretext of confronting terrorism, funded and coming from abroad. Ironically, despite all of the regime's rhetoric against foreign meddling and its use of overwhelming force, all signs indicate that the regime is struggling and incapable of deciding the battle—despite the considerable external support the regime receives from Iran and Russia, and despite support from Shiite militias (most notably Hezbollah's forces from Lebanon as well as Iraqi militias) operating under the direction of Iran. A number of other causes have contributed to the conflict's intractability as well: the hesitancy of international forces to provide serious support to the opposition; the spread of the destructive conflict over the entirety of Syria; the number of killed reaching more than a quarter million people (with similar numbers of wounded, missing, and detained); the displacement of more than a third of the Syrian people both internally and externally in countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan; and the extensive destruction of cities, towns, and villages. In light of all of this, the magnitude of the human tragedy has grown to unprecedented proportions. Furthermore, the risks of the disintegration of the Syrian state are ever increasing with Kurds taking control over their regions; Da'ish over Deir ez-Zor, ar-Raqqah, and Tadmor; al-Nusra Front and other Islamist factions over the countryside of Aleppo and Idlib, although with the presence of FSA (as well as splitting control of the city of Aleppo with the regime); and the FSA over large areas in southern Syria, especially in the Hawran. The regime controls the coast and its cities, among them Damascus, Homs, Hama, and As-Suwayda. In the absence of any party capable of decisively resolving the military conflict, the Syrian crisis and the humanitarian catastrophe continue to drag on despite the breakdown of the regime and its military machine, which has also led to the collapse of the Syrian state altogether.

Furthermore, the nature of the Syrian regime, with its structure as a police state or mukhabarat state, reliant on competing security services for repression, has contributed both to prolonging the crisis and deepening its destructiveness. The advent of a number of external parties—among them states like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar—supporting the Syrian opposition and the Islamists in particular has further reinforced the presence of Islamists in general, including the extremists among them. After the defections from the military that took place in the early days of the military conflict in 2011 and the formation of the FSA, all that remained of the Syrian military was a core fanatically loyal to the regime, resulting in a military leadership composed mainly of officers belonging to the Alawite minority who would fight with the regime as if it was an existential struggle. The regime has been supplied with weapons, fighters, and advisors from Iran, and the regime has been supported and protected politically and morally by Russia. This support from Iran and Russia has all been for the purpose of sustaining the regime until the

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time for negotiations over the future shape of the state. Despite the failure of all attempts at negotiations up to this point, the military horizons are even hazier, with the conflict at a stalemate. Therefore, it would seem that the likely exit out of this crisis, if not the only one, is to reach a formula of compromise through negotiations between the parties involved. These negotiations and the compromise would exclude Da'ish, of course, which awaits its defeat, or at least a reduction of its influence, especially following the increased involvement of Turkey, which is playing a larger and more direct role in the conflict. A negotiated solution could achieve change by putting in place a new coalition government that would give the opposition and the Sunni majority a larger role, along with guarantees for the protection of the minorities. The details, and even the general framework, of such a settlement will not become clear until its fruition, but all indications until now are that this is the way to go, despite the possibility in the meantime of intensified fighting and continued destruction, which may reach the city of Damascus next. Wide devastation has already been inflicted upon Rif Dimashq (the Damascus suburbs and countryside surrounding the city); the cities of Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, and their respective countrysides; as well as Dara'a and the area of Houran and south of Syria in general.

Libya

The revolution in Libya began on 17 February 2011, following the events in Tunisia and Egypt. In the beginning, the revolution took the shape of a peaceful, popular intifada (or uprising), but the regime headed by Muammar Qaddafi suppressed it with brutal force, using heavy weaponry and air force. As a result, the uprising turned into a military conflict, with the opposition supported by international powers via the UN Security Council, which approved military intervention by NATO against Qaddafi's forces. Thus, the Qaddafi regime was toppled, Qaddafi himself was killed, and his son Saif al-Islam was arrested. The National Transitional Council, composed of the opposition parties, took over power temporarily and issued a constitutional declaration on 3 August 2011. The declaration included a timetable for a transitional phase of 18 months that was supposed to result in the appointment of an interim government, the issuance of an election law, and the election of a National Constituent Assembly. And indeed, elections took place on 7 July 2012 and a General National Congress (GNC) was elected, which took power from the National Transitional Council. And on 7 October 2012 a government was formed, headed by human rights lawyer and activist Ali Zidan. The elections in Libya limited the role of the Islamists and gave the majority in the electoral lists at the national level to the liberals, led by Mahmoud Jibril.[9]

But the weakness of the state and its institutions, as well as the weakness of the security services and the military (which had been essentially just cadres loyal to Qaddafi himself in the Qaddafi era), meant not only that the military had to be reestablished completely, but also that the fledgling state and its military had to compete with tens of thousands of well-armed militias. Simultaneously, the country began to fragment along the lines of regional affiliations and tribal loyalties. All of this contributed to Libya entering into a political and military crisis, which involves what remains of the military led by retired general Khalifa Haftar, facing the Islamist militias (some of which are extremist), which the General National Congress (GNC) backed politically. At the expiration of its term in 2014, some of the members of the GNC refused its mandated dissolution and continued its work from Tripoli, despite the election of a new Council of Deputies (also referred to as a House of Representatives) that is now based in Tobruk. This situation has created a political and constitutional divide that is deepening regional divisions.

Another side of this crisis is the conflict between Islamists and liberals over the government of Libya, which turned into an open military conflict involving extensive foreign intervention. An additional aspect of this crisis is the conflict revolving around oil revenues and their distribution to the warring regions, which has precluded the use of these revenues for rebuilding the state.

As the situation in Libya deteriorated to the point that even Da'ish joined the conflict, the international community and the United Nations have made various attempts to stabilize the situation in Libya through rounds of negotiation and dialogue, in the hopes of reaching a power-sharing agreement between the warring parties; emplacing a technocratic government; and postponing the conflict, or at least managing and minimizing its most deleterious effects.

Yemen

The peaceful Yemeni revolution led by young people was launched on 11 February 2011, influenced by the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt, demanding freedom and either change in or the fall of the Ali Abdullah Saleh regime. Despite the losses of hundreds killed and thousands wounded by the gunfire of the regime, the peaceful character of the movement did not change, which was especially remarkable considering the widespread presence of arms in Yemen. The revolution culminated in what was known as the Gulf Initiative, which President Saleh signed, marking his ouster from the presidency and the transfer of his powers to his deputy, Vice President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. However, the document granted the deposed president immunity from legal prosecution, and Saleh maintained his influence in the military via his son Ahmed (who was then commander of the Republican Guard unit of the Yemen Army) and his supporters.

President Hadi took power on 25 February 2012 and tried to restructure the military and especially its leaders, many of whom owed their positions and thus their loyalty to the ousted President Saleh. Hadi issued decrees on 7 August 2012 removing a number of full brigades from the control of the Republican Guard, which was still at the time being led by Saleh's son Ahmed. But Yemen was politically divided between north and south (which have been unified as one state for just a little over two decades), and the Hadi government needed to confront the military challenges presented by the Houthis, whom Saleh had long waged a war against, as well as radical Islamists, specifically al-Qaeda. Iran entered this situation with a strong show of support for the Houthis. On 1 February 2013, the Yemeni government seized a cargo ship coming from Iran loaded with weapons and explosives intended for the Houthis.[11]

The Yemenis attempted, with help from the international community, to evade these dangerous obstacles through dialogue, which began on 18 March 2013 with UN mediation. However, the Houthis had their plans already in place, and began to expand their control over the regions adjacent to Sa'ada through fighting against the Salafists and al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, the major political powers in the capital took steps to stabilize the situation, extending the term of President Hadi for another year on 25 January 2014; agreeing to a new federal system for the country; delegating the president to restructure the Shura Council in order to grant greater representation to the South (after the Southern Movement withdrew from the National Dialogue Conference on 27 November 2013); granting the Houthis more representation; and granting the president the right to oversee the drafting of the new constitution.

[9] The National Forces Alliance won 39 out of 80 seats on the national level. See http://elections2012.ly/home/statistics

[10] On the Libyan situation, see the article in Arabic by Tarek Mitri, "From the revolution to the state: dilemmas causing the transition in Libya to totter," *Al-Hayat*, Part 1 published 27 November 2015; Part 2 published 30 December 2015.

[11] To follow the sequence of events after the revolution, see the reports in Arabic at http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews. For further details regarding the revolution, see Adel Mujahid al-Shargabi, "The historic bloc for the revolution of freedom and change in Yemen: from formation to disintegration," in *"The Arab Spring": revolutions for deliverance from Authoritarianism*, Hassan Krayem ed., Jeffrey D. Reger trans., (Beirut: L'orient des livres, 2014).

But the Houthis soon overran and took full control of the city of al-Khamri, a stronghold of the leaders of the Hashid tribe, and clashes broke out between them and tribes in the Arhab District of the Sana'a Governorate after their truce collapsed in February 2014. In July 2014, the Houthis took control over the Amran Governorate in northern Yemen, and then in August 2014 they took to the streets of the capital of Sana'a to demonstrate and protest against rising fuel prices. The Houthis called for the fall of the government, staged a sit-in in the capital, and mobilized gunmen to the point of triggering clashes between the Houthi and some Yemeni army battalions. On 21 September 2014, the Houthis took control of Sana'a and all of the official governmental headquarters in a coup d'état, which led to Houthi control over the port of al-Hudaydah and the city of al-Baidhah in central Yemen, paving the way for an invasion of southern Yemen.

On 6 February 2015, the Houthis issued a constitutional declaration that stipulated the removal of President Hadi, the suspension of the constitution, and the formation of a Revolutionary Committee that would assume interim authority, including the powers of the presidency. President Hadi, who had been detained, was able to escape to Aden in the south of the country, where he announced that he rejected the Houthi actions and would continue in his duties.

The Houthis formed an alliance with the deposed President Saleh and the forces loyal to him, and on 21 March 2015, these newfound allies proceeded toward the city of Ta'iz, the third largest city in Yemen and a gateway to Aden. On 25 March 2015, Hadi left the country as the Houthis marched toward Aden. Saudi Arabia responded by creating an alliance of ten countries under its leadership that began launching air strikes, calling the Operation "Decisive Storm."[12]

Thus, Yemen has plunged into a state of civil war, which has had a number of further implications: the disintegration and collapse of the state and its institutions; tribes using the arms so commonly found in Yemen to fight against the Houthis in most regions; the destruction of cities and archaeological sites along with fortified installations by Saudi air raids; and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation to the point that the United Nations has declared its maximum level of humanitarian emergency in Yemen, where more than 21 million people or 80 percent of the population need aid urgently owing to the lack of food and water, and to the spread of diseases.[13]

[12] http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2015/03/150327_timeline_yemen_crisis_recent_developments

[13] http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2015/03/150702_00_emergences_aid_yemen

Other cases in brief

Beyond the five aforementioned cases, it should be noted that the movements and uprisings constituting the "Arab Spring" have emerged in 17 Arab countries in total, at different points in time. The Gulf States, headed by Saudi Arabia, were able to secure their stability through lavish packages of social benefits. The costs of this approach amounted to tens of billions of dollars, but it allowed the Gulf States to avoid providing any concessions or achieving any progress with respect to freedoms and legal reform in their countries.

As for Bahrain, the broadly supported claims of the protest movement were violently suppressed with the intervention of the Peninsula Shield Force (the military arm of the Gulf Cooperation Council) and the arrest and incarceration of the movement's leaders. But Bahrain has not completely stabilized, and will not stabilize without serious internal dialogue that puts aside the dynamics of the Iranian-Saudi regional conflict in favor of the interests of the people of Bahrain and the development of Bahrain's political institutions.

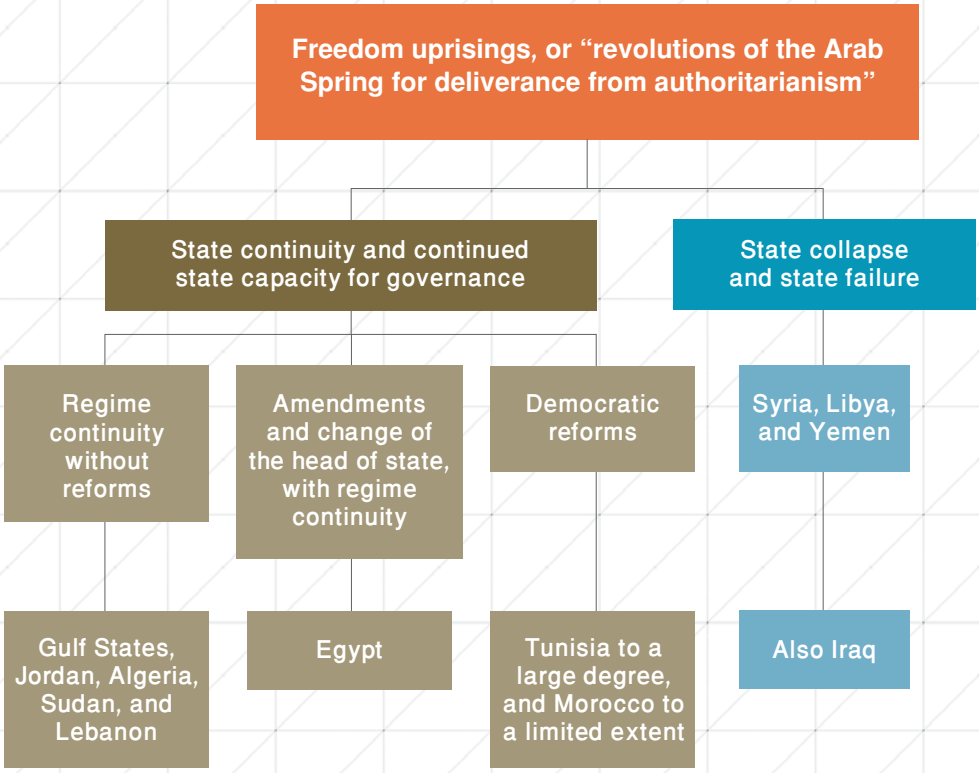
In Morocco, the king, in agreement with the opposition represented in parliament, has been able to offer limited concessions and move ahead with some reforms that allow greater representational political participation, but without undermining the monarchy or the powers of the king. A wide spectrum among the opposition has accepted this model of reform, as a gradual transitional reform of the political system.

What can be concluded from the outcomes of the uprisings of the Arab Spring?

Conclusions

First, these events have shown that the decisive factor in whether change occurs is the capacity of the state, in terms of its structure and its institutions (including the army), as well as its popular legitimacy and its ability to deal flexibly with and respond to public pressure. Or, conversely, change does not occur owing primarily to a lack of state capacity, which leads to the collapse of the state and the return to prominence of other loyalties that can rive society—whether sectarian, ethnic, tribal, religious, or otherwise. The following diagram illustrates what is meant by illustrating the extent to which state capacity affected the experience of these countries.[14]

In several cases, the state has been exposed as authoritarian. In these cases, the authoritarian regime had fused society and its disparate groups together only by force and repression. This was especially so in the cases of Syria and Libya, as well as in the case of Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein. When society rebels- as in the youth revolution in Yemen and the revolution of the oppressed in Syria and Libya- the authoritarian state resorts to excessive violence. This is what has happened in the case of Syria. Qaddafi tried the same, but his attempt was foiled by NATO military intervention. Saleh also tried, but the Gulf Initiative blocked such a path, so Saleh instead entered into an alliance with the Houthis as a partner in seeking to retake control of Yemen. Likewise, in the case of Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and under the policies of the ensuing Iraqi governments (especially under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki) with the support of Iran, the previously favored Sunni minority became excluded from power and both sides resorted to violence.



[14] This chart is taken—with some amendments, additions, and elaborations—from the article by Raymond Hinnebusch, "Introduction: Understanding the consequences of the Arab Uprisings: Starting points and divergent trajectories," *Democratization 22:2* (March 2015), 207.

In all of these circumstances, the state loses its legitimacy and ability to control masses through repression. This is what leads to the fall of the "wall of fear," meaning the perception among the masses of the authoritarian state's impunity and unlimited capacity to repress the slightest hint of dissent at will. The results are uprisings and, too often, continuing civil strife. The very idea of the state appears bankrupt, its institutions collapse, and society becomes divided, taking refuge in its primary affiliations whether its confessional, tribal ethnic or regional. For most, the fight becomes one for survival above all, while others take advantage of the chaos to fight consciously and intentionally for change. In the context of such divisions, as in all cases of communal conflict, external parties intervene under the pretext of supporting one of the groups involved, in order to not only protect their chosen local group but also to advance their own interests at a time of open conflict.

On the other hand, when the state is able to maintain itself, its institutions, and its legitimacy, then the government can either buy security and stability through the provision of benefits and financial concessions for many social groups, as in the case of most of the Gulf States, or resort to repression of the many and offer benefits to a few, depending on the social vertical division ethnic, regional or confessional, as occurred in the case of Bahrain, and also to some extent in

Algeria and Sudan. The latter option often uses regional rivalries to its advantage, as in the case of Bahrain, where the government painted the uprising as an Iranian-backed coup while seeking Saudi assistance to repress the protest movement.

Likewise, in Jordan, a combination of repression, benefits, and superficial concessions has secured the monarchy, especially in light of the instability in surrounding areas. The monarchy has used the fear of regional instability to shore up domestic and international support at a time of severe regional and domestic polarization that has impacted a small country already threatened by the long-standing divide between East Bank Jordanians and West Bank Jordanians (of Palestinian origin).

In Lebanon, the movement that demanded the change of the sectarian-based political system, in a balance of political power, which has not and does not reflect the broader society, remains inchoate. The sectarian structure is still stronger than the young, secular social forces that have pressed for this ambitious demand.

As for Egypt, an incomplete and limited revolution occurred that was then reversed, as detailed above. The revolution was able to produce change to the extent of overthrowing President Mubarak and thus changing the head of the regime, but the revolution did not unify its program, let alone put its full demands into effect, as it confronted the military. Instead, the military led the transitional period, first with the Muslim Brotherhood, and then against the Islamist movement. For these reasons, the state and the structure of the regime continued largely unchanged, and the military was thus able to stop and then reverse the transition toward more democratic institutions. Even the new constitution and its articles in support of freedom and democracy have been prone to violations and seemingly forgotten.

The remaining two relatively successful cases, Tunisia and Morocco, raise hopes for successful democratic transitions. Tunisia, thanks mainly to the neutrality of the military and the continuity of the state's institutions, has been able to enact a new constitution and elect a democratic and representative government, despite all of the difficulties and challenges previously mentioned. In Morocco, the gradual transition was and still is limited, but it has secured the consensus and stability necessary for the continuity of the state and most of its institutions. Nevertheless, fears that the monarchy could reverse even these modest reforms remain more than valid.

Second, the process of democratic transition—beginning with the dismantling of the authoritarian regime, its institutions, its culture, and its ideology—is an exceptionally conflict-filled process that will inevitably take time. The precise amount of time required is determined both by the degree of the authoritarian system's resistance, specifically through counterrevolutions and other countermeasures, and by the capacity of the social bloc demanding freedom and democracy, specifically the ability of its leadership to develop a program of change and then implement it.

In the case of the Arab Spring, what is called the "sultanic state"— where rule is authoritarian, factional, familial, and inherited—fell; however, the protest movements did not topple the underlying security-military authoritarian structure. The military and security apparatus could therefore contain these movements constitutionally and legally, because the social forces pushing for historical social change have so far been unable to impose democratic constraints on the

military and security services peacefully. Furthermore, the bloody confrontations throughout the region, but especially in Syria, had a negative domino effect in places like Yemen, Libya, and Egypt, wherein all parties have turned away from the logic of democratic concessions. In addition, there is the added complication of the discouraging experience of Islamists in power, such as in Egypt. Islamists have thereafter been largely excluded, with the exception of the two relatively successful cases of Tunisia and Morocco. Disputes among the forces for change, whether secular or Islamist, have weakened and even stopped the process of democratic transformation. In some cases, this has resulted in the return of authoritarianism as military regimes present themselves as pillars of stability against the threat of violent, militant Islam. Arab authoritarian regimes have made their living off of this false dichotomy between themselves and the specter of radical Islamists for decades.

Third, the question of political Islam and its adoption of peaceful, democratic means are still unresolved. The experiment in Egypt failed, and violent, radical Islam has spread throughout the region. Despite the exceptional Tunisian case, the moderate form of political Islam appears to be on the decline; however, it is possible that in the future a moderate form of political Islam may emerge from these experiences, one that accepts a civic state and a democratic framework. Nevertheless, for now, the model of political Islam presented by groups like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has been a failure in attracting Islamists and a failure in encouraging participatory, pluralistic democracy. But, the responsibility for the failure of this short-lived, undemocratic experiment is shared between the Islamists and the counter-revolutionary forces that repressed this experiment by force and with excessive violence. Likewise, the failure can also be partially attributed to the weakness of democratic, secular forces and their negligible role in the bilateral conflict between the military and Islamists in general. The exceptionality of Tunisia is again telling here, as all parts of society have played a role in its success: trade unions, civil society in general, Ennahda (or the Renaissance Movement, the main Islamist party), and both the leftist and the nationalist parties (who have carried on the secular tradition of the Bourguiba regime).

Fourth, the countries of the Arab Spring have been susceptible to virulently negative regional and international influences over time. With the advent of military clashes, ambitious regional powers such as Iran and Turkey as well as countries terrified of these ambitions like Saudi Arabia have fomented sectarianism and used it as a weapon, exploiting ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and local divisions to achieve their own ends and advance their designs for the region. The fact is that nearly everyone is complicit to some degree in failing to rectify sectarianism, which has spread since the 1970s along with Sunni fundamentalism and later the Shia' a rising after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. More recently, the American invasion of Iraq and the exclusionary policies of the Iraqi government (especially under al-Maliki) have fueled sectarian conflicts, which reached an unprecedented level in Iraq. Sectarianism has subsequently taken hold in Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. Thus region-wide developments and the influence of regional powers have shaped the course of events in a way detrimental to the interests of the people of these countries and their development toward inclusive, participatory democracy.

Fifth, this rising sectarianism has led to the rise of extremist, terrorist, Islamist forces such as Da'ish and al-Nusra (among the other branches of al-Qaeda in the region), as well as the Houthi in

Yemen and Shiite militias in Iraq and Lebanon backed by Iran. The cautiousness of the international community, led by the United States, toward changing the authoritarian regimes of the region has been supplanted by a policy toward the region that puts anti-terrorism first and foremost among the priorities of the international community, especially for the United States and Europe. But the "war on terrorism" is not only insufficient as a long-term strategy; it has also increased the suffering of the peoples of the region in the short term, spreading destruction and humanitarian disasters. In the current international climate, the idea of democratic transformation has fallen out of favor and become almost ignored as unlikely, unrealistic, or even impossible to achieve—marking a return, under the banner of anti-terrorism, to the cultural supremacist discourse of Orientalism that borders on racism toward the people of the region.

Sixth, there is often a positive role for regional and international bodies to play in managing conflicts and directing them toward peace and democracy, as has occurred in some cases in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. For Arab countries, such a positive regional framework has been almost nonexistent, institutionally limited to the Arab League, which reflect the wishes and aspirations of the dilapidated, retrograde Arab regimes, and not the people. Thus the Arab League has not played a substantial role in mediation, negotiation, guidance, or crisis management, which could have reduced the destruction and violence in the region. The same applies to a large extent to the largely formalistic and bureaucratic roles played by the United Nations, which has so far been ineffective in Syria, Yemen, and Libya.

Seventh and finally, it must be recognized that the experience of the Arab Spring revealed the atrophy and weakness of the institutional structures of civil society in general and of the political parties, especially the opposition, in particular. While spontaneity was a positive factor for mobilization in the beginning, as it allowed for a broad, spontaneous, youth-based mass movement, it became problematic when these forces could not organize their forces within either an institutional framework or within organized political parties that would be capable of combating both counterrevolutionary forces and political Islam. Likewise, the mechanisms necessary for the culture and work of democracy are still embryonic, and will need a long time to mature through learning and practice. For example, there were no serious attempts to implement concepts of transitional justice, accountability, and reconciliation, as occurred in South Africa and in some countries of Latin America and Asia. There must be a shift away from the old way of thinking about power as a prize, and to the victor go the spoils; about elections as an opportunity to seize power; and about dialogue as a way of dissimulating and outsmarting one's opponent. Instead, there must be a shift toward safeguarding citizen participation, the peaceful devolution or transfer of power, and democratic change; and toward enacting full citizenship and equality in human rights and obligations, as well as ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. Because, without such a shift, the path of democratic transition will remain rough, thorny, and prone to setbacks and deterioration. The hope remains, however, that the current generation that rebelled against the authoritarian regimes may continue and beget a new generation even more capable of continuing the struggle against authoritarianism for freedom, democracy, human rights, progress for the people, and improvement in the quality of life for a region long stricken by corruption and authoritarianism, and now beset by extremism and despair as well.