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Beyond Structure and Contingency: Toward an Interactionist and Sequential Approach to the 2011 Uprisings

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Abstract: *Taking as its starting point the mental earthquake produced by the 2011 uprisings, this article tackles the epistemological questions of causality and contingency in an effort to foster dialogue between comparative political regime studies, the sociology of revolutions and social movement literature. Based on a comparative analysis of three 'positive cases' (Egypt, Syria and Tunisia), and a 'negative case' (Morocco), it follows an interactionist and sequential approach to revolutionary situations. Its main objective is to expand the scope of the attempts aimed at reconciling structure and contingency, by focusing on the formation of large coalitions and the spread of mobilization on division or defection from within the repressive apparatus, and on the impact of crisis management by the incumbents. More specifically, the article highlights the fact that uncertainty affects not only the 'actors from below,' but all the actors present: the challengers as much as the incumbents and their international allies, the ordinary citizens as well as the officers and the recruits.*

Keywords: *Arab uprisings; Army; Causality; Coalition formation; Contingency; Crisis management; Defection; Egypt; Morocco; Repressive apparatus; Revolutions; Syria; Tunisia.*

Reflecting on Iran's 1979 revolution, Edmund Burke observed that a revolution 'sweeps' away not only a regime, but also a view of the world.[1] In the early 1990s, to grasp the extent of the surprise engendered by the events of 1989 in Eastern Europe, the American Sociological Association organized two symposia.[2] The wave of uprisings of 2011 also led to a mental earthquake, and scholars wondered, 'Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring.'[3] A fundamental epistemological question, that of causality, underlies such debates. For some scholars, revolutions are like 'traffic jams': They have some causes, which can be unraveled in retrospect.[4] The difficulty of constructing models and making predictions is connected to the complexity and multiplicity of these causes, as well as to their inextricable

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[1] E. Burke III (1988) Islam and Social Movements: Methodological Reflections, in: E. Burke III & I. Lapidus (eds) *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. 17.

[2] The proceedings of the first conference are published in: *Theory and Society*, 23(2), 1993; proceedings of the second are in: *American Journal of Sociology*, 100(6), 1995.

[3] F. Gregory Gause III (2011) Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability, *Foreign Affairs*, 90(4), pp. 81–90.

[4] See, e.g., Charles Tilly (1995) *European Revolutions: 1492-1992* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing).

nature. According to other scholars, revolutions are 'inevitably' a surprise,[5] since they belong to a class of 'contingent, unexpected, and inherently unpredictable' events.[6]

Despite the initial surprise, the 2011 uprisings and their results often were analyzed—after the fact—as developments stemming logically from more or less distant determinants, and consequently as 'inevitable.'[7] In contrast, I argue in this article that an interactionist and sequential approach is propitious for reconciling structure and contingency, and, even more, for expanding the scope of this reconciliation. Indeed, I aim to apprehend the processes underpinning these events on the basis of 'what actors are, do and say *in situ*' by examining—sequence by sequence—the connections between the macro level of the environment, the meso level of relations among collective actors, and the micro level of individuals.[8] In so doing, this article can contribute to fostering dialogue among comparative political regime studies, the sociology of revolutions, and social movement literature.[9] More specifically, I tackle the following enigma: Confronted with the same wave of protests, the Moroccan regime displayed resilience, unlike the governments in Tunisia, Egypt, or Syria, where popular mobilization developed into a 'revolutionary situation,' that is to say, a situation in which the state's sovereignty is subject to multiple, competing claims supported by a significant portion of the population, and where the power holders cannot, or do not wish to, crush the oppositional coalition.[10] Subsequently, in the medium term, these revolutionary situations led to different developments: a democratic transition in Tunisia, a counterrevolution in Egypt, and a civil war in Syria. In such diversified cases as those of Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Morocco— and beyond the alleged ontological opposition between republics and monarchies[11]— what can we attribute to structural determinants and what

[5] Timur Kuran (1995) The Inevitability of Future Revolutionary Surprises, *American Journal of Sociology*, pp. 1528–1551.

[6] William H. Sewell, Jr. (1996) Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology, in: T. J. McDonald (ed.) *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, 98 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press), p. 264; also see Charles Kurzman (2004) *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge and Harvard: Harvard University Press).

[7] For a critical review, see, e.g., Morten Valbjørn (2015) Reflections on Self-Reflections: –On Framing the Analytical Implications of the Arab Uprisings for the Study of Arab Politics, *Democratization*, 22(2), pp. 218–238.

[8] Following in the footsteps of Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi & Olivier Fillieule (2012) Towards a Sociology of Revolutionary Situations: Reflections on the Arab Uprisings, *Revue Française de Science Politique* [*English*], 62(5-6), pp. 1–29.

[9] In the same vein, see, e.g., Amin Allal & Thomas Pierret (eds) (2013) *Au cœur des révoltes arabes* [Inside the Arab revolts] (Paris: Colin); Joel Beinin & Frédéric Vairel (eds) (2013) *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press); Michel Camau & Frédéric Vairel (eds) (2014) *Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le Monde Arabe* [Political uprisings and recompositions in the Arab world] [(Montréal: Presses Universitaires de Montréal); Raymond Hinnebusch (2015) Conclusion: Agency, Context and Emergent Post-Uprising Regimes, *Democratization*, 22(2), pp. 358–374. For the use of Antonio Gramsci's ideas to understand these processes through their historicity, see, e.g., John Chalcraft (2016) *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[10] Charles Tilly (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley), pp. 189-222.

[11] For a discussion about monarchical exceptionalism and for a critical view of institutionalist explanations see, e.g., Daniel Bischof & Simon Fink (2015) Repression as a Double-Edged Sword: Resilient Monarchs, Repression and Revolution in the Arab World, *Swiss Political Science Review*, 21(3), pp. 377–395.

might we deduce as effects of contingency?

In the first section of this article, I question the structuralist bias explicit in the nomothetic models of political change and implicit in the analysis, leaving room for contingency solely at the level of mobilization (i.e., the actors 'from below'). Following this, I present the interactionist and sequential approach. Secondly, I explore to what extent some of the processes observed in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Morocco in 2011 tend to transcend the conditions of their genesis,[12] focusing on two main properties of the revolutionary situations: the spread of mobilization and the formation of large coalitions; and division or defection from within the repressive apparatus. Finally, I emphasize the fact that the way an authoritarian regime manages a crisis cannot simply be reduced to political preconditions; and, so doing, I highlight the fact that 'time matters.'[13] In the process, acknowledging the extent of 'our own ignorance,'[14] I shed light on certain gray zones that future historians might explore.

Beyond the Opposition between Structure and Contingency

The persistent structuralist bias

The 2011 uprisings triggered a frenetic wave of academic activity, and calls from all directions to 'renew,' 'revisit,' and 'reframe' debates.[15] On this occasion, attempts at de-compartmentalizing and invitations to 'capture the dynamism of the uprisings and their effects'[16] were proposed. However, the urge to grasp the contingency effects of these events has been expressed mostly through a greater attention to mobilizations or micro events. When it comes to analyzing the internal variations of the 'Arab Spring,' the structuralist bias tends to take the lead. The new impulse of the nomothetic approach can be epitomized by a 1994 research program launched at US government's request with the goal of producing tools to measure and predict sociopolitical instability. In this context, an ambitious quantitative study of the 'Arab Spring' was published.[17] According to the statistical regression analyses produced, the factors which most greatly reduced destabilization during the 2011 uprisings were: first, 'political preconditions' (type of political order, presence or absence of intra-elite conflict, and power transfer tools); secondly, an 'immunity' to internal conflicts that derived from having

[12] Roderick Aya (1990) *Rethinking Revolutions and Collective Violence* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis).
[13] Andrew Abbott (2001) *Time Matters: On Theory and Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

[14] Leyla Dakhli (2013) Tunisia and Syria: Comparing Two Years of Revolution, *Middle East Critique*, 22(3), p. 300.
[15] See, for example, Michelle Pace & Francesco Cavatorta (2012) The Arab Uprisings in Theoretical Perspective – An Introduction, *Mediterranean Politics*, 17(2), pp. 125-138. See also the following special issues: The Arab Uprisings of 2011, *Middle East Critique* (2013), 22(3); From Arab Spring to Arab Winter: Explaining the limits of post-uprising democratisation, *Democratization* (2015), 22(2); Révolutions arabes: un événement pour les sciences sociales ? [Arab revolutions: An event for the social sciences?], *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* [Review of the Muslim worlds and of the Mediterranean] (2015), 138.
[16] Steven Heydemann (2015) Explaining the Arab Uprisings: Transformations in Comparative Perspective, *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 1–13.
[17] Andrey V. Korotayev, Leonid M. Issaev, Sergey Y. Malkov & Alisa P. Shishkina (2014) The Arab Spring: A Quantitative Analysis, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 36(2), pp. 149–169.

experienced large-scale conflict in the recent past and the participation of Islamist groups in official political life; and thirdly, 'the level of internal contradictions' (related to religious and ethnic heterogeneity and to the unequal redistribution of power and economic resources). Certainly, this literature provides a wealth of insights. Nonetheless, it suffers from three major weaknesses, already raised by some sociologists of revolutions. First, this kind of retrospective and teleological never-ending quest focuses on distant or remote 'causes' of the emergence of mobilization, and increasingly use popular methods of providing evidence: regression statistics that identify 'pure' effects of one variable on another 'all things being equal,' or combinations of variables. Even though these analyses come closer to the realities observed, they still capture only what happened before the event. Second, the ambition to develop explanatory models tends to be reductionist and to obfuscate the fact that 'social causality is temporally heterogeneous.'[18] The third weakness is related to the difficulty of linking the micro level of individuals with the macro level, resulting in actors remaining in the background, when they are not portrayed as iconic figures, or subsumed under reifying categories.[19]

Even when there is an attempt to learn 'lessons from the Arab Spring,' the 'agency,' the 'contingency,' and the potential of 'surprise' too often are limited to the mobilization or to the actors 'from below.' For example, in light of the 2011 uprisings, Eva Bellin suggested analyzing 'the complementary roles of structure, agency, intention, and contingency in complex political phenomena such as political uprisings.'[20] However, she concluded that 'little' was 'surprising from a theoretical point of view,' except the social mobilization observed.[21] This tendency to confine agency and contingency to mobilization prevails even among the scholars of social movements who have been dealing with the issue over a period of time. As Philip Balsiger pointed out, 'the dominant conceptualization of social movement activity resembles a tennis player firing balls against a wall. The tennis player is the social movement […]. His opponent, meanwhile, is pictured as a wall: exhibiting certain structural characteristics.'[22] In the following sections, I suggest developing an interactionist and sequential approach that considers *all* the *actors present* as players, carrying the print of a historicity, but also subject to emotion, uncertainty, and experimentation by trial and error.[23]

Toward an interactionist and sequential approach

The interactionist and sequential approach advocated in this article is keeping with the ambitious project of Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, which aimed to

[18] Sewell, Three Temporalities, p. 263.
[19] Roderick Aya (2001) The third man; or, agency in history; or, rationality in revolution, *History and Theory*, 40(4), pp. 143-152.
[20] Eva Bellin (2012) Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring, *Comparative Politics*, 44(2), p. 127.
[21] Ibid, p. 135.
[22] Phillip Balsiger (2015) Corporations as Players and Arenas, in: M. J. Jasper & J. W. Duyvendak (eds) *Players and Arenas* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press) p. 119.
[23] Following in the footsteps of Bennani-Chraïbi & Fillieule, Towards a Sociology of Revolutionary Situations, see, e.g., Jasper & Duyvendak, (eds) *Players and Arenas*.

restructure the political process model around the study of mechanisms specific to different kinds of episodes.[24] However, I sketch out propositions, based on borrowings from other traditions, in order to make their model: 1) more interactive and sequential; 2) more open to the effects of contingency; and 3) more open to emotions. According to the authors in Dynamics of Contention, the main challenge for students of contentious politics is to 'identify crucial causal mechanisms that recur in a wide variety of contention, but produce different aggregate outcomes depending on the initial conditions, combinations, and sequences in which they occur.'[25] Therefore, they argue in favor of a 'reorientation of explanations from episodes to mechanisms and processes.'[26] Recognizing that early models 'downplay the contingency, emotionality, plasticity, and interactive character of movement politics,'[27] they propose a restructuration of the political process model in order to make it 'dynamic' and 'interactive.' In this article, I use some of their main concepts. As a reminder, the mechanisms are environmental, cognitive, relational, and recognizable when 'we see interactions among the elements in question altering the established connections among them'; they form a continuum with the processes, which are 'recurring causal chains, sequences, and combinations of mechanisms.'[28] In line with this, a sequence of action is a series of performances, underpinned by a set of mechanisms and processes. And performances are the cumulative whole of interactions between all the actors participating in a conflict; they are shaped by a history of protest, protestors' and police officers' cultures, and know-how acquired from past battles.[29] However, the participants also reinterpret them, and sometimes subvert or abandon them entirely, as a result of dynamics that are determined on the ground.

Notwithstanding the ambitious goal pursued in *Dynamics of Contention*, much remains to be done before reaching its objectives in terms of 'dynamism' and 'interactivity.' Similarly, we should note with the authors that 'contingency dogs [their] analytical path.'[30] Finally, emotions cannot be reduced to the mechanism of 'attribution of threat and opportunity.' To go further toward a 'dynamic' and 'interactive' approach, some scholars have argued for basing the analysis of the processes underpinning contention episodes, 'on what actors are, do and say *in situ*,' by taking into account 'all the actors present in the space of a given conflict.'[31] They also recommended examining, through a multilevel analysis, how

[24] D. McAdam, S. Tarrow & C. Tilly (2001) *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
[25] Ibid, p. 37.
[26] Ibid, p. 308.
[27] Ibid, p. 15.
[28] Ibid, p. 26.
[29] Charles Tilly (2008) *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 4-5.
[30] McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 311.
[31] Bennani-Chraïbi & Fillieule, Towards a Sociology of Revolutionary Situations, p. 13. For an implementation of this concept of multi-level analysis and causation inspired by symbolic interactionism, see, e.g., Olivier Fillieule (2015) Disengagement from Radical Organizations: A Process and Multilevel Model of Analysis, in: B. Klandermans & C. van Stralen (eds) *Movements in Times of Democratic Transition*, pp. 34–63 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).

'each sequence of actions is modified by processes which lead to its results (new states of equilibrium), which in turn help to define the environmental, relational and cognitive elements that influence the calculations of the following sequence.'[32] Along with these propositions, I suggest emphasizing the 'sequential' character of this interactionist approach, in order to highlight, with Andrew Abbott, the fact that 'time matters;' in other words, the order of sequences produces an effect on 'the way they turn out.' [33]

The interactionist and sequential approach I advocate here is extremely compatible with Ivan Ermakoff's 'positive conception of contingency.'[34] Indeed, Ermakoff contends that a distinctive 'class of processes' is identifiable during 'open-ended conjunctures.'[35] In contrast to a 'conjunctural causation,' which, according to George Steinmetz, 'refers to situations in which complex events are determined by variable constellations of causal factors,'[36] Ermakoff pays attention to 'the indeterminacy of multiple futures coexisting synchronically at one point in time.'[37] This 'endogenous' property is connected to 'a configuration of interdependence,' which is 'marked by actors' mutual recognition of their uncertainty,' and by the absence of a 'pre-established script.' From there on, he suggests 'tracking down' these moments of collective indeterminacy.[38] Claiming that it is 'through their impact on the agency of particular individuals that incidental causes affect evolving action systems and thereby acquire collective significance,' he distinguishes four types of impacts: 'A pyramidal impact rests on the existence of a hierarchical system of power relations. Pivotal is the action that decisively shifts a balance of power. Sequential impact describes the alignment of individual stances on observed behavior. The impact is epistemic when it affects beliefs that actors presume they are sharing.'[39]

In keeping with scholars such as Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper and Francesca Polletta, one also should go beyond the misleading opposition between 'emotion' and 'rationality' or 'cognition' and reincorporate the role of emotions during these sequences of actions and interactions without confining them to the micro-level of analysis. Indeed, emotions are 'collective as well as individual, and they permeate large-scale units of social organization, including workplaces, neighborhood and community networks, political parties, movements, and states, as well as the interactions of these units with one another.'[40] In line with Stéphane Latté, it is also important to pay attention to 'their collective character (a joint production rather than an individual creation), established (produced by inherited constraints associated

[32] Bennani-Chraïbi & Fillieule, Towards a Sociology of Revolutionary Situations, p. 14.
[33] Abbott, *Time Matters*, p. 51.
[34] Ivan Ermakoff (2015) The Structure of Contingency, *American Journal of Sociology*, 121(1), p. 114.
[35] Ibid.
[36] G. Steinmetz (1998) Critical Realism and Historical Sociology. A Review Article, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40(1), p. 173 quoted by Ermakoff, The Structure of Contingency, p. 70.
[37] Ermakoff, The Structure of Contingency, p. 110.
[38] Ibid, p. 100.
[39] Ibid, p. 66.
[40] Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper & Francesca A. Polletta (eds) (2001) *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 16.

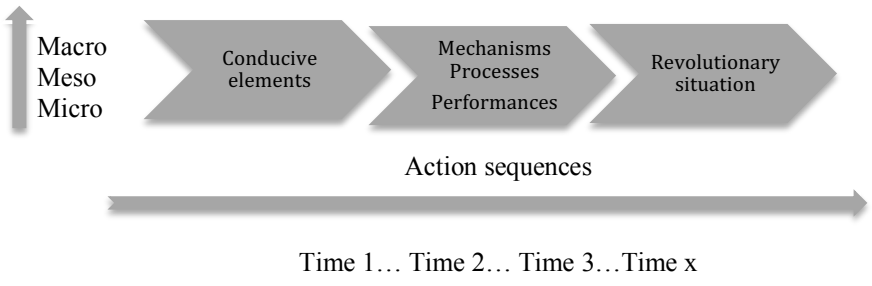
with the role, observed and adapted), reflexive (with the actors as aware as the observers of the constraints and opportunities of various emotional registers) and relational (the meaning and weight of emotional prescriptions varying from one social configuration to another, from one context of mobilization to another).'[41]

Notwithstanding the divergences between some of these theoretical traditions, I argue that an interactionist and sequential approach is particularly propitious to their reconciliation and to further exploring how to deal with the 'messiness' of causation during open-ended conjunctures: 'Causal mechanisms cumulate, contradict one another, aggregate, and link together, unfolding simultaneously on multiple levels.'[42] The main challenge is twofold. On the first level, we need to focus on what shapes a context of potentiality,[43] without, however, confusing the 'origins' of revolutions with their 'causes.'[44] In order to reduce the structuralist bias, we should grasp the contextual dimension, not as a set of determining causes, addressed mechanically and from above, but as *conducive elements,* which refer to the characteristics of the environment, the collective actors and the individuals. According to this view, environmental and relational elements tend to constrain the way actors express and frame their identities, their emotions, and shape the form of their interactions. In return, they are perceived and appropriated differently, depending on the actors, their resources, positions, dispositions, and interactions, etc. On a second level, an interactionist and sequential approach should enable us to pay attention to the indeterminacy of open conjunctures, and at the same time 'to de-essentialize any particular characteristics of players and arenas'[45] so as to avoid the illusion of the 'immaculate conception'[46] and to clarify the connections between the macro level of the environment, the meso level of relations among collective actors, and the micro level of individuals. It remains to be emphasized that a sequential multilevel analysis of the processes underpinning contentious episodes, based on 'what actors are, do and say *in situ*,' allows us also to go beyond the alleged structural oppositions between monarchies and republics in the Middle East. Wishing to expand the scope of the reconciliation between structure and contingency, I focus on the formation of large coalitions and the spread of mobilization in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco, then I move on to the defection within the repressive apparatus of the first three. Finally, I examine the impact of

[41] S. Latté (2015) Des « mouvements émotionnels » à la mobilisation des émotions [From "emotional movements" to the mobilization of emotions], *Terrains/Théories* [Fieldworks/Theories], (2). Available at http://teth.revues.org/244.
[42] Mark R. Beissinger (2011) Mechanisms of Maidan: The Structure of Contingency in the Making of the Orange Revolution, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 16(1), p. 27.
[43] Abbott, *Time Matters*, p. 51.
[44] Roger Chartier (1991) *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham & London: Duke University Press), p. 169.
[45] Jan W. Duyvendak & Olivier Fillieule (2015) Conclusion: Patterned Fluidity: An Interactionist Perspective as a Tool for Exploring Contentious Politics, in: J. Jasper & J. W. Duyvendak (eds) *Players and Arenas* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), p. 298.
[46] Leila J. Rupp & Verta Taylor (1987) *Survival in the Doldrums* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press).

crisis management by the incumbents.

Figure 1. **Interactionist and Sequential Approach to Revolutionary Situations**



Common Properties and Variable Configurations

The outbreak of protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Morocco reveals some common properties, recurrently observed during open-ended conjunctures. However, only the first three countries experienced a revolutionary situation. At the macro level, the four countries witnessed the spread of mobilizations to different categories of the population to varying degrees. According to social movement scholars, this phenomenon is related to fluidity and uncertainty, which become prevalent insofar as the usual rules of the game no longer are respected. At the same time, a phenomenon of *modularity* is observed,[47] in other words, there occurs a simplification in the ways of framing the situation and the unification of forms of action within the same national unit, as well as from one country to another. At the micro level, as uncertainty grew, the present actors no longer made decisions in the same way as they used to, even in Morocco. At the meso level, in the four cases, we observe a more or less cross-class coalition formation, i. e., the 'creation of coordinated action across a major class boundary'[48]—and coalescences—in the meaning of the coming together of actors from different social groups without any active coordination. Nonetheless, while defection or division destabilized the repressive apparatus in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, this was not the case in Morocco.

Formation of Large Coalitions and the Spread of Mobilization

Considering the formation of large coalitions and the spread of the mobilization as one of the main properties of revolutionary situations, scholars have examined closely the facilitating or inhibiting factors behind this phenomenon from two angles in particular, the form of the state and the shape of class conflict. However, beyond these factors, we also should take into account the processes at work during the events.

[47] Sidney Tarrow (1993) Modular Collective Action and the Rise of the Social Movement: Why the French Revolution Was Not Enough, *Politics & Society*, 21(1), pp. 69–90.
[48] McAdam & al., *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 275.

The Conducive or Hindering Elements

A situation is conducive when the state is exclusive and interventionist, and when the repression is indiscriminate and reaches a high-level. Moreover, cross-class coalitions are facilitated when the challengers are less organized and ideologically polarized.[49] Also, the high or low 'level of societal identity cleavages' (sectarian or ethnic cleavages),[50] and the manner in which they do or do not overlap with a class conflict, would encourage or hinder the formation of a cross-class coalition (see Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Environment Before the Beginning of Mobilization

	Tunisia	**Egypt**	**Syria**	**Morocco**
State	Exclusive and interventionist			Relatively inclusive
Repression	High level and indiscriminate	Sometimes high level and indiscriminate, sometimes isolated and selective	High level and indiscriminate	Isolated and selective
Level of societal identity cleavages	Very low	Medium	Very high	High
Civil society	Strong unions; Human rights and Ennahda activists repressed	Trade unionists mobilized; strong associations; Muslim Brotherhood tolerated	Weak unions and associations, political opposition repressed	Active and fragmented unions, associations, and political groups

As a number of studies have shown, the pre-revolutionary regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria displayed several common characteristics: They were repressive (although to varying degrees); their exercise of power was exclusive; they were interventionist, with very limited pluralism in the Tunisian and Egyptian cases; and they adopted neoliberal economic policies, calling into question past social pacts and reflecting, among other things, a concentration of wealth in the hands of those close to the inner circle of power. Consequently, the regimes became the principal targets of grievances. Nonetheless, the forms of repression adopted contributed to the variety of forms of coalitions and coalescences emerging during the revolutionary process.

In Tunisia, according to a study based on the Arab Barometer survey, there was a 'broader cross-class coalition,' with an over-representation of those aged 18–24 and having a

[49] See, e.g., Misagh Parsa (2000) *States, Ideologies and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
[50] Hinnebusch, Conclusion: Agency, Context and Emergent Post-Uprising Regimes.

'secondary/technical' education, but there was little representation of members of 'civil society.'[51] However, in Egypt, the composition of participants constituted 'a relatively narrow middle-class,' with an over-representation of those aged 35–44, and those with higher education, and a strong representation of members of 'civil society.' According to this research, the neoliberal policy of Ben Ali's regime exacerbated regional and generational disparities and was accompanied by the repression of civil society organizations that did not collude with the regime, whereas the regime of Mubarak dismantled 'welfare benefits for the middle class,' while tolerating the development of civil society.[52]

The regime of Ben Ali could be characterized as a 'meticulous organization' of repression.[53] At the start of the 1990s, it mainly targeted the Islamic movement, Ennahda, with the collusion of an array of actors attached to 'Tunisian secularism.' Gradually, the regime locked down the entirety of the protest arena. From 2005 on, to overcome their weakness, some activists, from the left and from Ennahda, started to coordinate their efforts, under the umbrella of the 18th October Coalition for Rights and Freedoms. In the interior of the country, associations linked to the regime and the UGTT union, whose central leadership seemed to be tied to the regime, were spared.[54] However, local union cells were 'abeyance networks' for various opponents and, at the end of the 2000s, never failed to participate in the local protest movements.[55] When the mobilization spread, grassroots members pulled the union's leadership into the protest. Similarly, the clientelistic networks of the dominant party rapidly dissipated, revealing once again that local elites quickly may turn into counter-elites in the course of a protest dynamic.[56] Such a spread of the mobilization might have been favored by the homogeneity of Tunisian 'societal identity.'[57]

The Egyptian configuration presents certain similarities and some differences. After alternating between massive indiscriminate repression and isolated and selective repression, the Mubarak regime tolerated the development of a civil society. Workers mobilized massively on a number of occasions in the course of the 2000s, but independently from the

[51] Mark R. Beissinger, Amaney A. Jamal & Kevin Mazur (2015) Explaining Divergent Revolutionary Coalitions: Regime Strategies and the Structuring of Participation in the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions, *Comparative Politics*, 48(1), pp. 1–24.
[52] Ibid, p. 19.
[53] Choukri Hmed (2015) Répression d'État et situation révolutionnaire en Tunisie (2010-2011) [State repression and revolutionary situation in Tunisia (2010-2011)], *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* [Twentieth Century: History Review], 128(4), p. 80.
[54] Jamie Allinson (2015) Class Forces, Transition and the Arab Uprisings: A Comparison of Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, *Democratization*, 22(2), pp. 294–314.
[55] Choukri Hmed (2012) Abeyance Networks, Contingency and Structures. History and Origins of the Tunisian Revolution, *Revue Française de Science Politique (English)*, 62(5-6), pp. 797–820.

[56] Amin Allal (2012) 'Revolutionary' Trajectories in Tunisia: Processes of Political Radicalization 2007-2011, *Revue Française de Science Politique (English)*, 62(5-6), pp. 821–841.
[57] Hinnebusch, Conclusion: Agency, Context and Emergent Post-Uprising Regimes,.

state-controlled unions.[58] Regarding the Muslim Brothers, being tolerated under Mubarak allowed them to accumulate organizational resources and electoral experiences,[59] thus making them the most powerful organized actor (besides the army) after the fall of Mubarak. In addition, a number of coalitions were formed (*Kifaya,* the April 6th Movement, and the National Coalition for Change). Moreover, 'new forms have been shaped by the rise of protest movements as an arena for coalition-building and dynamic processes of networking, involving different political factions and ideological programs.'[60] To some extent, during the eighteen days of the Egyptian Revolution a coalescence of these different networks was observed. On another level, as soon as the tide began to turn, there was a cascade of resignations within the National Democratic Party (NDP), the dominant party. The internal divisions already had widened in the preceding months, in conjunction with the adoption of new methods for the selection of electoral candidates, with a view to preparing the succession in favor of Gamal Mubarak, and which turned out to be ill-suited to the dynamics of local allegiances.[61] Finally, in the Egyptian case, the spread of mobilization was not hindered by societal identity cleavages, at least during the initial revolutionary sequence.

The Syrian configuration has been particularly distinctive in the intensity of the regime's repression in recent decades. This had decimated or led to the exile of parts of the opposition, while it had driven others underground. This also persuaded a great number of people to accommodate to the regime. Therefore, when the revolutionary process began, all the actors and organizations likely to mobilize the potential challengers were very weak. This situation would have encouraged the forms of coordination based on 'anonymity' and/or 'strong ties.'[62] However, local coordinating committees were also structured on the basis of pre-existing groups, formal and informal.[63] In the face of the fragmentation of the revolutionary movement, the administrative and economic elites of the Syrian regime experienced few defections. Their loyalty would be partially due to an interpenetration of

[58] Marie Duboc & Joel Beinin (2013) A Workers' Social Movement on the Margin of the Global Neoliberal Order, Egypt 2004-2012, in: Beinin & Vairel (eds) *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 205-227.
[59] Marie Vannetzel (2012) La clandestinité ouverte : réseaux et registres de la mobilisation des frères musulmans en Égypte (2005-2010) [Openly clandestine: Networks and registers for the mobilization of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt], PhD dissertation, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.
[60] Maha Abdelrahman (2011) The Transnational and the Local: Egyptian Activists and Transnational Protest Networks, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 38(3), p. 407.
[61] Virginie Collombier (2011) Gamal Moubarak et le Parti National Démocratique ou la stratégie du désastre [Gamal Mubarak and the National Democratic Party or the disaster strategy], *Outre-Terre* [Other World], 29(3), p. 343.
[62] Adam Baczko, Gilles Dorronsoro & Arthur Quesnay (2013) Mobilisations As a Result of Deliberation and Polarising Crisis. The Peaceful Protests in Syria (2011), *Revue Française de Science Politique (English)*, 63(5), p. 17.
[63] See, e.g., Matthieu Rey (2013) La révolte des quartiers: territorialisation plutôt que confessionalisation [The revolt of the districts: Regional autonomy rather than confessionalism], in: F. Burgat & B. Paoli (eds) *Pas de printemps pour la Syrie* [No spring for Syria] (Paris: La Découverte), p. 90; Reinoud Leenders & Steven Heydemann (2012) Popular Mobilization in Syria: Opportunity and Threat, and the Social Networks of the Early Risers, *Mediterranean Politics*, 17(2), pp. 139–159.

interests of the upper classes, who form a 'military-commercial coalition,'[64] and whose survival continues to depend on the state's protection, unlike in Egypt.[65]

In comparison with other regimes in the region, the Moroccan monarchy often is presented as 'an expert in survival.'[66] For over half a century, it defeated attempts to seize power, and defused various revolutionary aspirations.[67] On the one hand, after the bloody repression of the 'years of lead' (1960–1990), recourse to repression became isolated and selective, and social movements and demonstrations became routinized. On the other hand, a regular renewal of the clientelistic networks and the formation of dense and fragmented political, associational and union arenas allowed the regime to divide the challengers, and persuade many of them to accept partial rewards in exchange for their more or less collusive transactions with the regime. Consequently, grievances tended to be diluted. However, protests took place on February 20, 2011, in more than 50 locations. Indeed, the February 20th Movement spread rapidly, leading to the emergence of an *a priori* improbable coming together, blurring the usual political and social barriers.[68] Without precedent, regarding a national policy issue, the Movement brought together new players, civil society actors, members of governing parties and the parliamentary opposition, as well as activists from illegal organizations (from those laying claim to Islamism to different trends of Marxism). Indeed, beyond the conducive or hindering elements, some processes tend to transcend the conditions of their genesis.

The Intertwining of Mechanisms Favoring the Spread of Mobilization

At the meso level, different mechanisms intertwine in a way that fosters widespread extension of mobilization. Through relational and 'non-relational'[69] mediations, linkages are established between connected or unconnected social sites, and two cognitive mechanisms, in particular, encourage the spread of mobilization and the phenomenon of modularity. The first is the 'attribution of similarity.'[70] Facilitated by common institutional or cultural characteristics or those perceived as such, this mechanism still remains underpinned by the work of unifying perceptions, framing strategic identities, and the temporary obfuscation of misalignments in terms of the method or objectives. The second is emulation: the statement

[64] Elizabeth Picard (2008) Armée et sécurité au cœur de l'autoritarisme [Army and security at the heart of authoritarianism], in: O. Dabène, V. Geisser, & G. Massardier (eds.) *Autoritarismes démocratiques et démocraties autoritaires au XXIe siècle* [Democratic authoritarianism and authoritarian democracies in the 21st century], pp. 303–329 (Paris: La Découverte).
[65] Bassam Haddad (2012) *Business Networks in Syria* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).
[66] Lisa Anderson (2000) Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies Survive, in: J. Kostiner (ed.) *Middle East Monarchies. The Challenge of Modernity*, pp. 53–69 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers).
[67] Frédéric Vairel (2014) *Politique et mouvements sociaux au Maroc* [Politics and social movements in Morocco] (Paris: Sciences Po Les presses).
[68] Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi & Mohamed Jeghllaly (2012) The Protest Dynamics of Casablanca's February 20th Movement, *Revue Française de Science Politique (English)*, 62(5-6), pp. 103–130.
[69] David Strang & John W. Meyer (1993) Institutional Conditions for Diffusion, *Theory and Society*, 22(4), pp. 487–511.
[70] Ibid.

'the impossible became thinkable!' was reported in several countries, illustrating that the success of a performance produces demonstration effects and contributes to precipitating action.

Seen from Egypt, the rapid fall of Ben Ali, until then considered irremovable, led a group of Egyptian actors to recalibrate their perception of the situation, and to seize this opportunity to link their own issues to their perceptions of Tunisian events. While those more or less close to the Egyptian regime claimed that Egypt was not Tunisia, the challengers attempted to bring out the similarities between the two countries.[71] Moreover, this episode led some brokers 'quickly and suddenly [to] change their strategic calculations,' so as to favor crucial connections between different networks.[72] In Syria, these events also led to the transformation of 'the perceived political opportunities, independently of the evolution of the Syrian regime.'[73] In Morocco, while supporters of the regime heralded a new version of the 'gospel' of the 'Moroccan exception,'[74] some activists mobilized to defend the idea that Moroccans were facing the same injustices as Tunisians, Egyptians, etc. Furthermore, even as the Moroccan protest arena was beset by a number of cleavages, the initiators of the movement first chose to put aside their differences, emulating what they perceived to be the coming together in Tahrir Square during the first stage of the revolution.[75]

Along with these relational and cognitive mechanisms, we also should pay attention to the 'emboldening emotions,'[76] which range from moral shock to feelings of empowerment. In Dara'a, some children were arrested and tortured after having written anti-regime slogans, similar to those that they had heard in the media, on the walls of their school.[77] On March 13, 2011, residents took to the streets (although the social base of Dara'a had appeared to be close to the regime). Similarly, concerning the collective deliberations among the Syrian challengers, Adam Backzo and his co-authors highlighted the 'circular relationship between the constant evaluation of the contexts of action, the emotional intensity, and the definition of a collective good.'[78]

Finally, we need to emphasize the varying effects the absence of a 'pre-established script' produced. As noted by Youssef El Chazli, on the 25th of January 2011 in Alexandria,

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[71] Youssef El Chazli (2012) On the Road to Revolution. How Did 'Depoliticised' Egyptians Become Revolutionaries? *Revue Française de Science Politique (English)*, 5-6 (62), pp. 843–865.
[72] Killian Clarke (2014) Unexpected Brokers of Mobilization: Contingency and Networks in the 2011 Egyptian Uprising, *Comparative Politics*, 46 (4), pp. 379–397.
[73] Baczko, Dorronsoro & Quesnay, Mobilisations As a Result of Deliberation, pp. 6, 13.
[74] E. Burke III (2014) *The Ethnographic State* (Oakland: University of California Press).

[75] M. Bennani-Chraïbi & M. Jeghllaly, The Protest Dynamics of Casablanca's February 20th Movement; and Sélim Smaoui & Mohamed Wazif (2013) Étendard de lutte ou pavillon de complaisance ? [Fighting symbol or flag of convenience?], in: Allal & Pierret (eds) *Au cœur des révoltes arabes*, pp. 55–79.
[76] Wendy Pearlman (2013) Emotions and the Micro-foundations of the Arab Uprisings, *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(2), p. 387.
[77] Reinoud Leenders (2012) Collective Action and Mobilization in Dar'a: An Anatomy of the Onset of Syria's Popular Uprising, *Mobilization*, 17(4), pp. 419–434.
[78] Baczko & al., Mobilisations As a Result of Deliberation, p. 6.

'Most of the activists quickly found themselves in a strange dilemma: They hadn't planned for their marches to succeed, so they hadn't really planned on how the day should end accordingly.'[79] Besides, the initiators of the movement quickly were overwhelmed by the dynamic of the street. In this respect, we should point out that although in Morocco uncertainty was far from being absent at the start of the mobilization, unlike in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, political fluidity was rapidly offset by self-restraint that both the authorities and the challengers exercised. Therefore, the Moroccan repressive apparatus experienced neither divisions nor defections.

Research Perspectives on Challengers' Coalitions

To carry out further research on the formation of coalitions from an interactionist and sequential perspective, it is necessary to collect sufficient data, from one sequence to another and from a multilevel analysis perspective. The aim, here, is to grasp the reconfigurations of coalitions, how these transformations affect the form and the scope of their interactions, their performances, their targets, and their 'attribution of opportunities/threats.'[80] One of the challenges is to disentangle the different kinds of mechanisms underpinning the interactions among all the actors present, as well as their various effects. Taking this into consideration, I suggest some cautionary remarks.

First, it is important to identify the different turning points, from a multilevel analysis perspective, by cross-checking factual accounts and also by paying attention to the inflections of actors' perceptions. Secondly, we should avoid, if only provisionally, classifying the actors too quickly in preconceived categories (for example, 'Islamists'/'secularists'), and giving too much importance to actors perceived as 'decisive' due to their position, their level of organization, or merely their visibility. Thirdly, it is necessary to remain attentive to the way of labeling and to the work of homogenization by a whole series of actors. The (self-)labeling of actors also plays a role in the battle between challengers and incumbents, in the internal struggles among challengers (to provide the group with an identity and with a demonized alterity, to frame emotions, to shape an image, and an aesthetic, etc.). Fourthly, when categorizing actors based on the collective identities they put forward, it is important to consider the phenomena of splits, mergers, transformation, etc.; and the porosity and the circulation among protest arenas, associations and various political sites, official and unofficial, clandestine and legal.

Finally, at the individual level, we need to examine actors' environments, the transformation of individual values and practices in relation to other dimensions of existence

[79] Youssef El Chazli (2017) Four Scenes of the Egyptian Revolution in Alexandria: A Microhistory of January 25. How a Series of Contingencies Walked Us to the Revolution, online at : http://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/01/25/feature/politics/four-scenes-of-the-egyptian-revolution-in-alexandria-a-microhistory-of-january-25/, accessed July 26, 2017.

[80] McAdam & al., *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 46.

and to the work done by mobilization entrepreneurs; the redefinitions of sociability, community links and forms of inter-individual attachment during the revolutionary processes; and the phenomena of multi-positioning, reconversion, transformation of the commitment, defection, and variation in the intensity and duration of the participation (indeed, of the simple identification with an imagined community).[81]

Division or Defection From Within the Repressive Apparatus

The collapse of a state's repressive capacities constitutes another major characteristic of revolutionary situations. During the 2011 uprisings, attention was focused on the armies. Much research has established a causal relationship between the characteristics of the military institution and the reaction of its officers and recruits faced with mass nonviolent mobilization. However, some studies allow us to perceive contingent phenomena.

Defection and Loyalty: Is There No Room for Surprise?

According to certain scholars, the degree of homogeneity, institutionalization and professionalization of the army shapes loyalty or defection.[82] An army is socially homogenous or segmented on the basis of primary solidarity (blood ties, ethnicity, sectarianism, and tribe). It is institutionalized and professionalized when it functions as a specialized sector, governed by its own operating rules, and when promotion is based on merit and professional performance. Conversely, it is weakly institutionalized and professionalized, when it is strongly imbued with external logic, and when hierarchical positions are connected to primary ties of solidarity, political loyalties and economic collusion.

The more homogenous the army, the more institutionalized, professionalized and removed from political matters, the less its interests are intrinsically bound up with those of the regime, the less it would be disposed to repress nonviolent mass mobilization that is sociologically representative of the nation (Table 2). The Tunisian army is presumed to represent this archetype. In contrast, the more segmented, less institutionalized and more politicized the army, the greater the likelihood that it will experience internal divisions and/or defections, in the case of high levels of repression: the army command—whose interests and survival are intrinsically bound up with those of the regime—tends to remain loyal to the end, while recruits are less inclined to repress protestors who 'resemble' them sociologically. The Syrian army is alleged to reflect this second model. Halfway between these two configurations, the Egyptian army is said to be homogenous, institutionalized and

[81] Fillieule, Disengagement from Radical Organizations.
[82] See, e.g., Bellin, Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East, p. 143; and Robert Springborg (2014) Arab Militaries, in: M. Lynch (ed.) *The Arab Uprisings Explained*, pp. 142–159 (Columbia: Columbia University Press).

professionalized, like the Tunisian army; but with aspects in common with the Syrian army in terms of its centrality to the construction of the state, and its 'economic corporatization.'[83]

Table 2. **Factors Facilitating or Inhibiting Defection from or Loyalty to the Army**

	Characteristics before the revolutionary process	Revolutionary situation	Post-sequence 1 process
Tunisia	Homogenous, institutionalized, professional, 'apolitical'	Dissociation from the president attacked by challengers	Limited role
Egypt	Homogenous, institutionalized, professional, 'politicized,' central economic actor		Central role
Syria	Segmented, weakly institutionalized and professional, 'politicized,' economically important actor	Division	Loyal members => harsh repression Dissidents => Free army

To reinforce loyalty and as coup-proofing strategies, regimes adopt a number of measures.[84] In a preventative way, they offer economic and political incentives; they guarantee their direct control over the army through members of their family, clan, etc., or they establish a system of surveillance and 'counterbalancing strategies' among different structures of the repressive apparatus.[85] Nevertheless, during open-ended conjunctures, all is not decided in advance.

Uncertainties Surrounding Defection and Loyalty

When the mobilization spreads, the incumbents tend to assign the repressive tasks to the units that they consider the most loyal, and they apply sanctions. In contrast, those challenging the regime resort to tactics designed to encourage the armed forces to rally to their side.[86] Once more, the 'absence of pre-established script' produces different effects of contingency among officers and recruits. In this respect, El Chazli reports on an eloquent activist's account: "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."[87] Moreover, the information at the disposal of the officers and the recruits does not always allow them to make 'rational calculations.'[88] They do not necessarily have a clear vision of their own reference group's positions, the risks they are incurring, the state of the power relationships between the political regime and its challengers, or even the future

[83] Picard, Armée et sécurité au cœur de l'autoritarisme, p. 322.
[84] Holger Albrecht (2015) Does Coup-Proofing Work? Political–Military Relations in Authoritarian Regimes amid the Arab Uprisings, *Mediterranean Politics*, 20(1), pp. 36–54.
[85] Springborg, Arab Militaries, p. 149.
[86] Neil Ketchley (2014) 'The Army and the People Are One Hand!' Fraternization and the 25th January Egyptian Revolution, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 56(1), pp. 155–186.
[87] El Chazli, Four Scenes of the Egyptian Revolution in Alexandria.
[88] Sharon E. Nepstad (2013) Mutiny and Nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring Military Defections and Loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain and Syria, *Journal of Peace Research*, 50(3), p. 341.

attitude of their external allies. Yet, in certain circumstances, officers and recruits are forced to decide on the spot, 'emotionally.' Thus, it is important to stress that even the army command, *a posteriori* considered homogenous and institutionalized, does not automatically choose the side of the 'people.'

In the Tunisian case, a whole 'myth' was created around General Rachid Ammar, who was then Army Chief of Staff. For instance, rumors circulated about his refusal to obey orders to fire on the crowd, and the resignation or sidelining of his own superior by Ben Ali; rumors that the General denied afterward, but which have played a role in 'the assurance/de-assurance games.'[89] According to Michel Camau, starting with the protests in Gafsa in 2008 and Ben Guerdane in 2010, a model of participation of the armed forces in the maintenance of order started to take shape, centering around three elements: locking down troubled areas and acting as a buffer between the police and the population; non-substitution for the police forces; and not opening fire on protestors. In a sense, the general might have been a 'consenting victim to the heroization of the military that was merely carrying out its assigned role, with only legalism as a guide, without having to experience the dilemma of the *exit* and of loyalty.'[90] On the other hand, it was some elite police units, considered as tied to the regime, who defected; a process that has yet to be documented.

As for the Egyptian case, it allows us to glimpse a way of managing mutual uncertainty. Starting from the recruitment process, the army proceeds to create a homogenous institution, and this homogenization process also takes place throughout officers' careers, with permanent surveillance of their religious and political behavior.[91] Despite all of this, when widespread mobilization began in 2011, the army command multiplied the number of internal surveys to determine to what extent soldiers were inclined to fire on the crowd, and make choices likely to maintain the cohesion of the institution.[92] Ultimately, homogeneity and cohesion are not static and irreversible qualities; they are the result of ongoing efforts and can be threatened.

Research Perspectives on the Repressive Apparatus

Research on the 2011 uprisings, focusing essentially on the army, too often has viewed the repressive apparatus as 'monolithic.'[93] When sources become more available, it will be fruitful to retrace meticulously the sequences of action involving the different security

[89] Michel Camau (2014) Le soulèvement populaire tunisien: retour sur images [Tunisian uprising: Back to the images], in: *Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le monde arabe* [Political uprisings and recompositions in the Arab world] (Montréal: Presses Universitaires de Montréal), p. 61.
[90] Ibid, p. 68.
[91] Tewfik Aclimandos (2015) De l'armée égyptienne. Éléments d'interprétation du 'grand récit' d'un acteur-clé du paysage national [The Egyptian army: Some elements to interpret the "great narrative" of a key player on the national stage], *Revue Tiers Monde* [Third world review], 222(2), p. 89.
[92] Amy Holmes (2012) There Are Weeks When Decades Happen: Structure and Strategy in the Egyptian Revolution, *Mobilization*, 17(4), p. 397.
[93] Vincent Geisser & Abir Krefa (2011) L'uniforme ne fait plus le régime, les militaires arabes face aux 'révolutions' [The uniform does not make the regime any more, the arab Military faces the 'Revolutions'], *Revue internationale et stratégique* [International and strategic review], 3(83), p. 94.

apparatuses: Identifying actions, inaction, and interactions within the security apparatuses and between the various security apparatuses, with political leaders, protestors, and external allies. On another level, it would be useful to specify the context of demonstrations of loyalty or defection, at what level and under what circumstances they were produced, the relational, cognitive and emotional processes, which underlay them, and the extent of their impact.

Loyalty or defection can occur at the individual level, in one part of a security apparatus, or in its whole. Loyalty is made manifest in a number of ways and to varying degrees: Giving and executing orders in the context of one's mission, on the basis of routines; in respecting the chain of command; taking initiatives from one's superior position in the chain of command or from the bottom rung of the hierarchy; following a limited or lasting break in the chain of command and/or operational routines; cooperating with other services; cooperating only partially or not cooperating with other services, etc. Moreover, maintaining loyalty is a result of various processes which are not mutually exclusive: the identification with an emotional community; the absence of a perceived dissonance between the actions to be taken, the conception of one's function, social roots, and moral values; the evaluation of costs and benefits for oneself or for one's reference group; a calculation shaped by a set of causal factors, structural and/or situational; and 'pyramidal alignment,' based on 'the existence of a hierarchical system of power relations;'[94] or 'sequential alignment,' after observation of the behavior of one's reference group.

Defection is revealed in different ways and to various degrees: not carrying out part of one's orders, without leaving one's position; remaining in uncertainty and inertia; disobeying orders and turning in one's weapons; 'fraternizing'; disobeying orders and taking up arms to defend those challenging the regime, etc. It is also produced by a number of types of processes, not mutually exclusive: interactions with the protestors who attempt to co-opt them; 'moral shocks' and dissonance between the actions to be taken, the self-conception of his or her function, social roots, moral values, etc.; evaluation of the costs and benefits for the reference group, or for oneself as an individual; 'pyramidal alignment'; 'epistemological alignment,' reflected in a change of beliefs; 'sequential alignment,' in defining oneself as a function of one's choices and the attitudes of one's reference groups (generational, familial, ethnic, sectarian, tribal, professional, or ideological); and alignment on the positions perceived as dominant within the institution, after the perception of an internal change in power relationships in their favor.

Crisis Management: Timing (Mal)Adjustment and Cross-Perceptions

The way an authoritarian regime manages a crisis has an impact on the formation of coalitions, elites' loyalty to the regime or their defection, and international reactions.[95] Certainly, reactions in times of political crisis mostly are shaped by a history of interactions

[94] Ermakoff, The Structure of Contingency, p. 66.
[95] Parsa, *States, Ideologies and Social Revolutions.*

between the incumbent regime and its challengers. They also depend on resources accumulated at the national and international level. However, in open-ended conjunctures, the regime's reactions—much like protestors' performances—oscillate between established registers and innovations. The very fact that events occur in different timeframes, that they give rise to 'neighborhood effects,'[96] and international (non)reactions to varying degrees, contributes to reshuffling the cards and reconfiguring the foundations of the economy of concessions and of repression. In other words, forms of crisis management can't be inferred automatically based on the type of regime.

Incumbents react with threats, sanctions, and repression, but also with offers: discursive and symbolic, political change, material goods, lobbying efforts to target specific groups, etc. In observing the events, some of them try to draw lessons to refine their 'counterrevolutionary' strategies. They produce narratives and emotional scene setting to 'affect the strategic calculus of citizens, allies, and adversaries'[97]; warn of chaos; criminalize demonstrators; associate them with foreign powers; organize counterdemonstrations; readjust financial, military and diplomatic resources that they manage or fail to mobilize; etc. From this perspective, an examination of crisis management in Tunisia, in Egypt, in Syria and in Morocco allows us to glimpse several variations (Table 3), in terms of the timing of the reaction (early on or late), the degree of adjustment of offers and of sanctions (mistimed, disproportionate or relatively appropriate), the degree of disorganization at the level of the repressive apparatus, and the images conveyed (indicating the mastery of the situation or a loss of control).

Table 3. Crisis Management by Political Regimes

Reactions of the regime	Timing	Degree of adjustment	Degree of disorganization	Images conveyed	Examples
- Discursive and symbolic offers	Delayed reactions	-Maladjusted offer - Indiscriminate repression	Strong	Loss of control of the situation	Tunisia, Egypt
- Offers of material goods **- Lobbying** **- Sanctions, repression**	Early	- Attempts to anticipate and to adjust the offer - Indiscriminate, disproportionate, high-scale repression	Variable, yet to be documented	Partial loss of territories	Syria
	Early	- Adjustment of the offer - Limited and selective repression	Weak	Mastery of the situation	Morocco

[96] Lisa Anderson (2013) 'Early-Adopters' and 'Neighborhood Effects,' in: C. Henry & J. Ji-Hyang (eds) *The Arab Spring: Will It Lead to Democratic Transitions?*, pp. 27–32 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
[97] Steven Heydemann & Reinoud Leenders (2011) Authoritarian Learning and Authoritarian Resilience: Regime Responses to the 'Arab Awakening,' *Globalizations*, 8(5), p. 649.

In Tunisia and in Egypt, the concessions came too late after indiscriminate repression; the repressive apparatus seemed somewhat disorganized; and the crisis management gave the appearance that the regimes had lost control of the situation. In an analysis, which I do not claim to be exhaustive, I highlight some elements. For example, the Tunisian case is an excellent example of the leadership reacting too slowly. The regime and its media were silent for a long time, and they applied the usual measures to end the protests, without managing to hinder the spread of the mobilization.[98] Ben Ali so failed to realize the gravity of the situation that he did not bother to cut short his private visit to the Emirates. In such a centralized system, his absence might have left room for hesitation, and it was only upon his return on December 27, 2010, that the machinery truly was set in motion. Even worse, the responses of the regime were completely inadequate, given the scale of the protests, and this was only accentuated as the crisis continued, which gave credence to 'the idea of a loss of control over the situation, which gave further impetus to the protest dynamic.'[99] The police repression on January 8 and 9 2011 seems to have been a point of no return. On another level, a lack of coordination added to the weakening and disorganization of the security apparatus.[100] This was exacerbated by the mistrust between the agencies and by individual rivalries, and, among other things, this resulted in retention of information or disinformation among different agencies. Thus, the strategies of 'divide and rule' seemed to have opened the way for some unanticipated effects during the crisis. This example demonstrates that, even for those whose fate seems, at first glance, to be linked to that of the regime, mutual uncertainty does not necessarily result in alignment, but instead may trigger a reinforcement of mutual mistrust.

While the Tunisian revolution inspired Egyptian revolutionaries, Mubarak and his close advisors, in turn, committed at least two errors in assessing the situation.[101] First, they began by minimizing the crisis. 'Egypt is not Tunisia' was both a narrative spread by the incumbents in the context of the exchanged moves with the challengers, and a belief shared at the very highest levels of state. Secondly, it seemed that they had been convinced that the army was going to protect the regime, even though, from 2007 on, there were rumors circulating that officers were planning a coup in the event of Gamal Mubarak coming to power. As for the repressive apparatus, images displaying the dithering, ambivalence and loss of control of the situation, were widely circulated.

Unlike Egypt, some political regimes tried, in different ways, to learn from 'errors' committed by their neighbors. Determined to avoid the same fate as Muammar Qadhafi in Libya, the regime of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria attempted many strategies simultaneously and successively. Firstly, it shifted increasingly toward indiscriminate, large-scale and

[98] Camau, Le soulèvement populaire tunisien, p. 50.
[99] Ibid, p. 51.
[100] Noureddine Jebnoun (2014) In the Shadow of Power: Civil–Military Relations and the Tunisian Popular Uprising, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19(3), pp. 296–316.
[101] Collombier, Gamal Moubarak et le Parti National Démocratique, pp. 339-340.

disproportionate repression. This strategy might be related to two main factors: First, the incumbent regime did not have any intermediaries, either to demobilize the challengers or to negotiate with some of them; and, second, the repressive apparatus was 'unfit for purpose,' forcing the regime to abandon some territories from the end of spring 2011.[102] Besides the escalation of repression, the diffusion of terror among the population, the liberation of common prisoners alongside jihadists, and the reinforcement of the military arsenal, the regime also followed a strategy of 'divide and rule' at the international, regional and especially national level.[103] Indeed, at the start, the mobilization was peaceful; it brought together Sunnis, but also Kurds, Christians and Druzes. Faced with that, the regime launched a communication campaign denouncing 'sectarian sedition,' and terrorism. While the demonstrators chanted: '*Sunni wa 'Alawi, wahid, wahid, wahid*' (Sunnis and Alawis, united, united, united), the regime positioned itself as the sole guarantor of 'interfaith tolerance.'[104] Despite the inventiveness displayed by some revolutionaries in bypassing their fragmentation, which was amplified by the regime's repression,[105] divisions in the anti-regime camp grew to the extent that the conflict became internationalized and a matter of sectarian division. On the other hand, the heterogeneous coalition around Bashar Al-Assad continued to expand to include 'adversaries to… opponents to the dictator,'[106] at the national, regional and international level.

In Morocco as well, the regime seemed to have learned some lessons from its own past as well as from its neighbors' immediate past and present. As soon as mobilizations started to spread around the region, the regime multiplied its attempts to buy social peace, official and unofficial negotiations, and individual and collective pressure, and reactivated networks of local elected representatives. The king very quickly presented a reform plan likely to redirect actors—who had 'strayed' from the legal opposition—toward institutionalized political channels. The regime also enjoyed enhanced support from the European Union, which held Morocco up as a 'reformist' model for the region. Yet it was in terms of repression that the most significant difference could be observed. While blood continued to flow in the region, in Morocco, the number of deaths was ten in eight months. During the 2011 protests, the regime effectively modulated its repressive options for each sequence of the protest, while making adjustments to the inflections it perceived at the regional and international levels. However, despite the regime's efforts, the movement was resilient. First, the regime's concessions gave the movement momentum and were perceived as an opportunity to put forward a whole array of sectorial and local claims. After that, the

[102] Baczko & al., Mobilisations As a Result of Deliberation, p. 20.
[103] François Burgat (2013) La stratégie Al-Assad: diviser pour survivre, in: F. Burgat & B. Paoli (eds) *Pas de printemps pour la Syrie*.
[104] Ibid, p. 25.
[105] Leïla Vignal (2014) La révolution 'par le bas' en Syrie [Revolution 'from below' in Syria], in: Camau & Vairel (eds) *Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le Monde Arabe*.
[106] Burgat, La stratégie Al-Assad, p. 19.

early defections came from actors well enough positioned on the institutionalized political scene to hope to benefit from the reforms put in motion, and who had taken to the streets as a means to exert pressure in negotiations with the palace. Eight months after the start of the movement, the second wave of defections stemmed from a 'counter-bandwagon effect,' related to the diminished morale of the challengers still in the streets, with an increasing awareness of the unpropitious regional circumstances, and a perception that mobilization benefited only a certain contingent from the initial challengers who had taken to the streets.[107] It should be emphasized to what degree in Morocco, the uncertainty inherent to open-ended conjunctures was rapidly offset by self-restraint, by the authorities, as well as by a protest movement dominated by 'organized' actors, 'proud of their ability to control the streets.'[108] Therefore, neither the initiators of the movement nor the repressive apparatus were irremediably overtaken by the 'street.' Consequently, a point of no return was not reached, and the route of gradual change remained the order of the day.

Conclusion

During open-ended conjunctures, indeterminacy disturbs the routinized functioning of societies, undermines certainties and ritualized and embedded practices, and leads *all the actors present* to veer off the beaten path; in so doing, open-ended conjunctures transform structures. In comparing the Tunisian, Egyptian, Syrian, and Moroccan cases, we see that the form of the state and of the social conflict contributes to shaping the configuration of coalitions confronting each other in open-ended conjunctures. However, these factors are not sufficient to hinder the extension of the mobilization, the formation of large coalitions and the defection of actors assumed to be allies by those in power. Similarly, and contrary to certain retrospective predictions, the structure of the repressive apparatus does not automatically determine loyalty or defection; despite its homogeneity and its professionalization, the Tunisian army did not defect during the first revolutionary sequence, and the Egyptian army did not automatically rally to the side of the revolutionaries. Moreover, the societal identity cleavages are not necessarily static, allowing for the 'prediction' of whether or not mobilization will spread to other categories of society.

Indeed, in open-ended conjunctures, an array of processes and of performances contributes to redefining the conditions of protest activities, especially since events occur in a number of locations, at varying times. Also, the regime's elites are subject to a tension between crisis management repertoires established in recent years and the need to improvise. Ways of interpreting national and regional events, the nature and timing of reactions, and the degree of disorganization manifested seem to have played a fundamental role, including the maintenance or loss of external support for regimes. Thus, in Tunisia and in Egypt, the

[107] Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghllaly, The Protest Dynamics of Casablanca's February 20th Movement, p. 129-130.
[108] Ibid, p. 130.

regimes were slow to act, and the proposed reforms and modalities of repression proved ill suited to the protest dynamic, and did too little too late. The incumbent leaders seemed to have been overtaken by events, then abandoned by some of their usual support bases within the state and society, and only timidly backed by their usual external allies. In contrast, the Syrian and Moroccan regimes demonstrated foresight and modulated their reactions as a function of their observations of what was unfolding in the region and internationally. However, major differences emerged. In the Syrian case, an escalation of the repression contributed to radicalizing the challengers, and then militarizing a conflict, which endured, thanks to the support provided to the various protagonists by competing foreign donors, and to effects such as those produced by the Libyan events; the regime of Bashar Al-Assad managed to survive (at least a few years) even if it was forced to abandon territories. In the Moroccan case, the limited use of repression, and the self-limitation exercised by some of the principal actors contributed to reducing the margins of uncertainty; the regime was not confronted with an irreversible loss of control of the situation.

Going forward, much work remains to be done to move further on in an interactionist and sequential approach to open-ended conjunctures. While the ambition to apprehend this class of events in a more interactive and dynamic way is somewhat common to several scholars, the main challenge here is to develop the means to go beyond the declamatory stage. In addition, in this article, I have sketched some avenues to be explored in terms of degree and extent of the implementation of the recommended framework. Undoubtedly, the traces of the effects of contingency and of emotions during contemporary events are easier to grasp for the analyst of social mobilizations. Indeed, it is much more difficult to have detailed and cross-referenced accounts of interactions, emotions, and trial and error processes, sequence by sequence, for state actors, agents of the repressive apparatus, regional and international actors, etc. However, these obstacles should not lead to a reinforcement of the division of tasks among scholars: focus on structures and continuities from a macro-level standpoint for scholars in comparative political regimes; and the analysis of interactions, emotions, and the effects of contingency, from a micro and meso-level perspective for scholars of social movements.

Beyond the events of 2011, the approach advocated should encourage the establishment of multidisciplinary teams that share the same willingness to open black boxes, to conduct multilevel analyses, and to track meticulously and sequence by sequence the interactions among different actors present during an open-ended conjuncture. Furthermore, to pursue these multilevel analyses, we seriously should consider mixing several methods, while remaining attentive to the epistemological stakes of each choice: While regression statistics contribute to capturing the conducive elements at one point in time, combining ethnography and sequential analysis would be more appropriate for dealing with the ‘messiness’ of causation during open-ended conjunctures. The remaining methodological challenge is to capture the processes at work, the turning points, and the different types of

contingency effects, while bringing the actor back in, not as a puppet, but as a historicized actor, an actor acted upon, acting and interacting. In other words, what the event does—immediately, and in the short, medium and long terms—to ordinary citizens, organizations of social movements, state and repressive apparatus, regional and international actors, etc., constitutes a vast and fertile terrain for future empirical, theoretical and methodological research.

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