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**Trajectories and Outcomes of the ‘Arab Spring’:
Comparing Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria**

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Abstract

Almost three years have passed since the ‘Arab Spring’ began in late 2010. In the major sites of popular uprisings, political conditions remain unsettled or violent. Despite similarities in their original opposition to authoritarian rule, the outcomes differed from country to country. In Tunisia and Egypt, processes of transiting from authoritarian rule produced contrasting consequences for democratic politics. Uprisings led to armed rebellion in Libya and Syria, but whereas Gaddafi was overthrown, Asad was not. What explains the different trajectories and outcomes of the Arab Spring? How were these shaped by the power structure and levels of social control of the pre-uprising regimes and their state institutions, on the one hand, and by the character of the societies and oppositional forces that rose against them? Comparing Tunisia with Egypt, and Libya with Syria, this paper discusses various factors that account for variations in the trajectories and outcomes of the Arab Spring, namely, the legacy of the previous regime, institutional and constitutional choices during “transition” from authoritarian rule, socioeconomic conditions, and the presence of absence of ethnic, sectarian and geographic diversity.

Keywords: institutions, transition, Islamists, Egypt, Tunisia, Syrian, Libya

JEL classification: N15, N17, P16

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Trajectories and Outcomes of the ‘Arab Spring’: Comparing Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria

Almost three years have passed since the ‘Arab Spring’ began in late 2010. In the major sites of popular uprisings, political conditions remain unsettled or violent. Despite similarities in their original opposition to authoritarian rule, the outcomes differed from country to country. In Tunisia and Egypt, processes of transiting from authoritarian rule produced contrasting consequences for democratic politics. Uprisings led to armed rebellion in Libya and Syria, but whereas Gaddafi was overthrown, Assad was not. What explains the different trajectories and outcomes of the Arab Spring? How were these shaped by the power structure and levels of social control of the pre-uprising regimes and their state institutions, on the one hand, and by the character of the societies and oppositional forces that rose against them? Comparing Tunisia with Egypt, and Libya with Syria, this paper discusses various factors that account for variations in the trajectories and outcomes of the Arab Spring, namely, the legacy of the previous regime, institutional and constitutional choices during “transition” from authoritarian rule, socioeconomic conditions, and the presence of absence of ethnic, sectarian and geographic diversity.

The popular uprisings that started in Tunisia in December 2010 led to revolts and uprisings across much of the Arab world. The unprecedented protests, demanding human dignity, freedom and social justice, underwent different trajectories and produced different outcomes. Whereas Tunisia and Egypt experienced regime transitions, other countries, such as Morocco and Jordan, preempted sociopolitical reform with a combination of economic compensation and religious discourse, partly aided by Saudi Arabia and the wealthy Arab Gulf states.

With events still unfolding in unpredictable ways, it is difficult to evaluate the prospects for democratization and regime change. This short paper does not claim to provide a comprehensive treatment of many factors of many kinds that shaped the trajectories of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. It suggests, however, the importance of considering the interplay between the types of pre-uprising regimes, their institutional frames and their relations to the state; the sociocultural characteristics of the societies under authoritarian rule and their impact on national mobilization; and, most of all, specific difficulties and conflicts that attended the transition from authoritarian rule. Focusing on these factors, the paper contrasts the relative success of Tunisia's move towards democratic politics with the short-lived rise of the MB in Egypt, and compares the relatively rapid collapse of the Gaddafi regime with the ability of the Asad regime to resist large-scale armed rebellion.

Tunisia and Egypt

Within the Arab world, Egypt and Tunisia have long shown a high degree of national identity and social homogeneity. Unlike in other Arab countries, the people in Egypt and Tunisia affiliated themselves with the state and did not imagine themselves to be the arbitrary creations of imperialism, as was the case in the Levant or Libya where identifiable nation did not exist before independence. Moreover, a history of centralized rule allowed the state and its institutions in Tunisia and Egypt to differentiate themselves from specific regimes. Their regimes were harshly authoritarian but state institutionalization reached sufficiently high levels as to be able to separate civil from state institutions even before the formation of post-colonial regimes. As a result, specific regimes did not politicize civil society

and state institutions to the point of having them serve regime ideology and interests alone. Moreover, the weak ideological or political identification of the regime with the state allowed for a relative separation of the regime from the military such that the latter, regardless of its intentions, could claim to serve national rather than solely regime interests. (Such separation did not exist in Syria which has practically no distinction between the ruler, his family and the ruling party.) To some extent, that separation allowed the first phase of the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia to end with the quick overthrow of their respective presidents when state institutions, most importantly the army, abandoned Mubarak and Ben Ali.

There was a stark difference between the two countries, however. In Tunisia, the military took a neutral stance from the regime and the revolution and the head of parliament replaced the president according to the constitution. The military in Egypt temporarily sided with the 2011 January ‘Revolution’, formed a council, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and took over the executive authority from the presidency in the name of protecting and leading the revolution. The neutral stance of the Tunisian military, which had no interest in assuming power to maintain its interests, paved the way for civilian authority to manage the transition from Ben Ali’s rule, sparing the country the trouble of transferring power from the military to civilian government. In contrast, the army has been an important actor in Egyptian and regional affairs since Muhammad Ali (1805–1848), the founder of modern Egypt, established a large army, modelled after European military forces, and supplied by modern industries and institutions to be a nucleus of reform (Marsot 1984; Overton 1971). By the time of the uprising, the Egyptian military, empowered by the regime’s heavy investment in it, refused to

relinquish power and intervened to preserve its economic and political interests. In the event, the course of the post-Mubarak “transition” was dictated by institutions of the *ancien regime* led by the SCAF. The scope of competitive politics was narrowed to Parliament and the Presidency, institutions contested even under Mubarak. There was no challenge to the substantive power of the *ancien regime* embedded in the military, bureaucracy, judiciary and the police which effectively fragmented the social forces that drove the 2011 uprising, leaving them, unable, for example, to form a united front to draft a new constitution.

In Tunisia, there was no strong coercive apparatus to dictate the rules of transition, or intervene to tilt the balance of power between deadlocked oppositional forces. Hence, civil society could facilitate political negotiation and sometimes stop certain forces from dominating the political process. As such, adversarial political forces could bargain and negotiate more effectively. For example, they implemented a process of establishing commissions to deal with corruption, human rights violations, and, crucially, a high commission to manage democratic reform and elections. This last commission created the electoral rules and oversight organization to carry out elections to the Constituent Assembly which took place in October 2011. There was, no doubt, substantial rivalry between different political parties and organizations, especially between the Islamist Nahda party and other secular and human rights groups, over seats in the Assembly and whether decision-making would be majority- or consensus-based. In the event, Nahda secured a majority in the Assembly. But its victory did not mean an Islamist monopoly of the drafting of the new Constitution because decision-making would not be majority-based and Nahda chose not to dominate decision making so as not to isolate itself from the non-Islamists. Instead, Nahda, headed a coalition government that included two

other major parties, the Congress for the Republic and Ettakatol. This “troika” led the transitional phase. In fact, such an experience of cross-party cooperation dates back to 2005 when the Tunisian opposition formed the *October 18 Collectif* – represented by secular, Islamist, leftist, and human rights groups – to confront Ben Ali with demands for reform. In the case of the “troika coalition”, power-sharing was achieved by Nahda’s leadership while other secular leaders respectively assumed the presidency and led the Constituent Assembly. A notable achievement of post-Ben Ali politics, power-sharing saved prevented the Tunisian government from ending in the kind of “zero sum” stalemate that ensnared Egypt’s MB and its supporters on one hand, and the old regime and anti-MB masses on the other.

It mattered, too, that the Islamists during Ben Ali’s rule had been forced underground or into exile so that Tunisia’s secular and liberal forces had not had to face, and therefore did not fear, the electoral strength of the Islamists. Thus, many secular and liberal parties in Tunisia eschewed anti-Islamist rhetoric in their electoral campaigns or struggles with Nahda. Indeed, center-left parties that were not anti-Islamist performed better in elections than parties that resorted to anti-Islamist rhetoric. Hence, the Congress for the Republic, and Ettakatul were willing to form a coalition government with Nahda, a move that enabled the major parties to compromise on various issues. In turn, Nahda did not regard power-sharing with liberal forces to be a threat to its own future, unlike the MB in Egypt which was locked in a bitter conflict with state institutions, rival parties, and other anti-Brotherhood forces. Secondly, a “Salafi factor” aggravated the fear of the Islamists in Egypt where the Salafis won a fifth of the parliamentary seats, but lessened it in Tunisia where the Salafis did not contest in the elections. To that extent, the Salafis’ presence or absence weighed on the prospects of

cross-ideological coordination. After the first referendum on amending Egypt's 1971 Constitution, the "Yes" vote mobilized by the Islamists made it clear to non-Islamists that hastily held elections would result in a Parliament controlled by the Islamists and remnants of the Mubarak's National Democratic Party with the blessings of the SCAF.

More broadly, the absence of strong state actors after Ben Ali's fall necessitated a process of establishing institutions to manage a new pluralistic political spectrum. The process allowed political parties and civil society to create on January 26, 2011 the National Council for the Protection of the Revolution from an alliance of 28 associations. Among those were the General Confederation of Tunisian Labor (UCGT), the Association of Judges, and the Bar Association (Mccurdy 2011). Tunisians developed other "transition institutions." There was, notably, the High Authority for the Achievement of the Revolution's Objectives, Political Reform, and Democratic Transition (HIROR) which was composed of political parties and civil society groups and which issued decrees related to political parties, associations and electoral laws. To take a far-reaching example, HIROR's formula for electoral contestation accommodated small parties by creating a relatively large numbers of seats per district and requiring no electoral threshold to enter parliament which permitted more potential winners from all parties (Sarsar 2013). This electoral formula, used in first post-Ben Ali elections to the Constituent Assembly in 2011, did not allow the Islamists to get a majority of the seats but compelled political forces to negotiate many core issues prior to the drafting of the Constitution. The framework of compromise and processes of negotiations were facilitated by the breakdown of the Ben Ali era institutions and the relative cohesion

of the new political elite. In fact, a shared commitment to democratic rules and dismantling the old regime's institutions encouraged the political elite to accept inclusive politics that would allow all political forces to gain from the electoral process. To some extent, the cohesion of the new political elites was derived from their past intensive dialogues, mostly during their exile in France, about the principles that should guide Tunisia after Ben Ali. It helped the transition that Tunisia's civil society was represented by Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and other secular and liberal groups that kept track of the government's performance through protests and dialogue (Bellin 2013).

In that manner, Tunisian parties and civil society organizations that displayed strong cohesion in the uprising coped well with divisions created by post-Ben Ali politics and averted dangerous polarization. Their Egyptian counterparts failed badly in this regard. In their post-Mubarak politics, Egypt's non-Islamist secular and liberal forces failed, as it were, to develop into institutionalized political forces that could participate in negotiations, compromises or coalitions with the Islamists. Instead, the coordination and collective actions that they showed during the uprising collapsed into distrust and enmity after Mubarak's fall. This led to disastrous polarization between the MB, on one side, and non-Islamist forces and, eventually the state institutions, on the other. The Egyptian uprising, in neither dismantling the *ancien regime* nor creating new institutional mechanisms to lead the transition, permitted the so-called "deep state" to reassert itself while the deepening polarization led many non-Islamists to side with the military against the MB.

Ironically, it was a swift, SCAF-endorsed free-and-fair electoral competition-based democratic transition that exacerbated the polarization by disadvantaging most of the revolutionary forces due to their lack of electoral organization. Crucially, moreover, the Islamists had little incentive to compromise with weak, unorganized and divided non-Islamist forces. The MB won all the elections although real power still lay in the institutions of the old regime, not those won through elections. When it labored to survive authoritarian rule, when electoral victory was unimaginable, the MB employed a patient, gradualist approach to political participation. But Mubarak's overthrow precipitously created a political opening that pushed the MB away from its gradualist approach. Now, in free and fair elections, when victory had become a viable option (Brown 2012), the MB seemed ready to discard its well-known slogan, 'Participation, not domination.'

Also hindering the MB's cooperation with other forces was the rise of a conservative leadership in the MB prior to 2011. The rise was partly forced by the heavy repression that the Mubarak regime unleashed against the MB's reformists after its members had won around 20 per cent of the seats in Parliament in 2005. In 2007, the constitution was amended to prevent the MB from making further electoral gains. Within the MB, the response to repression widened the rift between conservatives, who feared for the survival of the movement, and reformists who pressed for political participation and openness. As political space was reduced, so the Islamists' reformists were weakened vis-à-vis their conservatives. The growing influence of figures such as Mahmoud Izzat and Mahdi Akif in the MB's Shura Council and the Leadership Bureau, the results of MB's internal election in late 2009, and the election of Muhammad Badie as its new leader in 2010 handed control to the seniors and conservatives. The struggle between conservatives and reformists

was compounded by the defection of important reformists, such as Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib, Leadership Bureau member Abdul Mun‘im Abul Futuh and certain prominent leaders of the 1970s, who accused the leadership of violating the MB’s regulations and illegally engineering Badie’s ascent.

After Mubarak, with little encouragement to compromise with other political forces or to be content with partial victory, the MB’s conservative leadership decided to support the SCAF’s transition plan and declined to join anti-SCAF protests. Soon, the MB became preoccupied with the procedural aspects of transition as opposed to the task of building political alliances at which their reformist leaders were masters under authoritarian rule. In a way, the conservative leadership was correct: the MB’s Freedom and Justice Party won every election – the constitutional referendum (March 2011), parliamentary elections (2011–2012), elections to the Shura council (2012), presidential election (2012), and another constitutional referendum (December 2012). In another sense, all that was a Pyrrhic victory: the more handily the MB won, the more polarized was Egyptian society between Islamists and non-Islamists. The MB steadily lost a large part of the populist legitimacy and sympathy they had garnered under authoritarian rule. Above all, its victory in isolation left the MB incapable of creating and leading broad alliances, which might have been the only feasible way to maintain the momentum of the 2011 uprising against the “deep state.”

The split between Islamists and non-Islamists was aggravated by an ideological legacy of distrust that had long been sown among Egypt’s dissident forces. All previous regimes cultivated a fear of Islamism and offered themselves as the only bulwark against an Islamist takeover. From 2007 onwards, for example, relentless media campaigns associated terrorism with the MB’s ideology (Shehata

and Stacher 2007). On their own, non-Islamist forces had already noted the MB's electoral capacity since the 1980s when some parties took advantage of it to enter Parliament. But the apprehensions cut both ways after the uprising. The secularists feared an Islamist takeover of the state through elections while the Islamists dreaded being forced back underground by future secular regimes. At the same time, the revolutionary youth was afraid of being overwhelmed by a triumphant MB majority while the secular forces, watching the MB's collaboration with the SCAF, were frightened of an MB-SCAF alliance. In these circumstances, there was no national coordination to manage a transition from uprising to stable democracy.

In the space of a year, the balance of power decisively tilted against the MB. The Islamists had organization, societal outreach and electoral victories. Yet, the old regime retained control of state institutions – the military, police, judiciary, media, and bureaucracy – which enabled the SCAF to dictate the rules of politics. Indeed, when the SCAF acquiesced to Mubarak's ouster, the former claimed the role of protecting the revolution. The SCAF claimed the same when turning against Mursi, making it possible for many anti-Mursi or anti-MB forces to welcome the coup as the SCAF's move to guide Egypt's transition. Between the overthrow of Mubarak and that of Mursi, the SCAF had grasped de facto executive power, leaving an elected civilian president shorn of centralized power and real authority. In other words, the popular mobilization against the regime in 2011 deposed the president and some of his associates but did not dismantle state institutions or curb the power of the military. When President Muhammad Morsi tried to prevent the military and the judiciary from undermining his presidency, by issuing his constitutional declarations of November 22, 2012, it was, arguably, “too little, too

late.” Mursi’s move to grant the presidency extraordinary powers that would place it beyond judicial review – in a word, to centralize power in his office – backfired, upsetting non-Islamist forces and antagonizing the military, providing a pretext for a subsequent coup. In the end, the “Egyptian Spring” was not a revolution, as Asef Bayat astutely noted, only a ‘refolution’, or an uprising that ‘push[ed] for change for reforms in, and through, the institutions of the existing regimes’ (Bayat 2013: 53).

In retrospect, Islamists and non-Islamists alike ended up being reformist, not revolutionary. They shared a failure to go beyond a quick but faulty transition that diverted the focus of the uprising from battling the state to fighting themselves, from striving for substantive democratization to engaging in divisive electoral competition. From the beginning, the uprising was loosely unified by broad demands. Divided along political and class lines, the uprising lacked strategic cohesion or revolutionary organization that could have forced through a transition independently of the SCAF. As Bayat has further observed, the forces of the uprising did not have strong agency or clear plans. They could not move towards radical change. Indeed, ‘the demands for “change”, “freedom” and “social justice” were so loosely defined that they could even be appropriated by the counter-revolution’ (Bayat 2013). Unlike them all, the SCAF was clear about its interests. Those lay in maintaining the supra-constitutional status, which the military had enjoyed under previous presidents (who came from the military) and which it proceeded to enshrine in the constitution to ensure its complete control of matters related to the armed forces, including the defense budget and USA-supplied military assistance. The SCAF preserved the old regime’s institutions, including the bureaucracy, the state owned enterprises in which former officers are embedded, the

police, the state-owned media and the judiciary. The SCAF proceeded to immunize their autonomy from unfavorable electoral outcomes.

Syria and Libya

Uprisings in Libya and Syria did not even lead to anything like the transitions seen in Tunisia and Egypt. Although the Gaddafi and Asad regimes showed some similarity in their responses to popular uprisings, the outcomes were quite different. Whereas Gaddafi's regime fell quickly, Asad's has manifested unity and strength so far.

Syria differs from other countries in the Middle East in that the Asad regime had always conflated its identity with that of the Syrian state. Indeed, prior to 2011, Syria was ideologically and institutionally identified with the Asad regime. Before its independence from France in 1946, Syria was merely a geographical expression – it did not constitute a unified state or separate political entity and lacked an exclusive central authority that served as a focus of identity and loyalty for the population. This accounted for a succession of military coups (more than ten successful ones between 1949 and 1970) and the rising influence of various military factions in politics and power struggles. However, after the last coup in 1970, Hafez al-Asad took power and ushered in new regional, economic and political shifts that consolidated his rule and prevented the recurrence of military coups and factionalism within the ruling Baath Party and the army. Since then, the Asad regime had counted on a wider set of state institutions with more power-sharing mechanisms and a larger scope of co-optation. As Hinnebusch notes, the Ba'ath Party and the presidency share power that rests on three overlapping pillars: 'the party apparatus, the military-police establishment and the ministerial bureaucracy.

Through these interlocking institutions, the top political elite seeks to settle intra-elite conflicts and design public policy, and through their command posts, to implement policy and control society' (2001: 111). The Ba'ath Party apparatus penetrates all state institutions and civil society organizations while the party's military organization exercises political control over its military members (Hinnebusch 2011). Hence, the ruling coalition and the political system in Syria are far more institutionally interlocked than their counterparts in other authoritarian Arab regimes. As such, preserving the integrity of the coalition becomes critical to the survival of the regime and its institutions.

To survive in such a structure, other institutions also strive to maintain their co-optative capacity (Stacher 2012). Thus, elite co-optation is not the burden of the ruling party alone, as in Egypt, but an onus on all state institutions that must directly recruit support for the regime. In short, the regime 'overcomes' the heterogeneity of Syrian society and opposition by creating its opposite – a cohesive unitary regime. Such a coalition makes it difficult for anyone to attempt a coup without risking his own survival. This explains why no state institution has attempted to take over the presidency to ride out the crisis as happened in Egypt.

Another crucial feature of regime cohesion is the unquestioning support the regime receives from the coercive apparatus and the ruling inner circle, a highly sectarian institution that is tightly controlled and represented by the Asad clan. This has been ensured by the presence of highly trained and loyal units inside the military and the security services, such as the Republican Guard and the Fourth Armored Division. Their carefully selected leaders are commanded by officers who belong to the president's own family and clans such as the Makhloufs and Shaleeshs (Gambil 2006). Indeed all key posts in the military and security services are controlled by

closely related families. For instance, the president's brother, Maher, commands the Republican Guard (an elite force whose six brigades protect the regime from domestic threats) and heads the fourth armed division (one of the army's best equipped and most highly trained forces). The president's brother-in-law Asef Shawkat, who was killed in a bomb blast in July 2012, was the former commander of the intelligence agency and deputy Chief of Staff of the Syrian military. Under Hafez al-Asad, state building meant consolidating his authority and creating a cohesive regime by conflating its identity with that of the state. Hence, any attempt to dislodge the regime was treated as a challenge to the state and drew brutal repression without fear of elite or institutional defection. Asad's regime grounded its preservation on a cohesive elite structure of power in direct control of state institutions, a cohesive business sector dependent on the regime, and the adoption of violence as a modality of governance. Yet such a regime could not flexibly reform or allow for political maneuvering in the face of popular protest. Consequently, it would only resort to all-out repression to root out the opposition.

The tendency of the international media to play up a Shia-Sunni civil war obscures the social and regional reality that forms the "big picture" of the conflict. In the absence of a unified political identity or community, the fragmentation of Syrian society along sectarian, ethnic, regional and class lines prevented the conception of a national movement that could overthrow the regime in 2011. Most importantly, a rural-urban divide has hindered the development of a nationwide movement (as emerged in Tunisia and Egypt) to force the Syrian political elite to be wary of using heavy repression. The geography of the protest movement demonstrates its class roots – most of the areas that witnessed huge popular protests were economically underdeveloped and marginalized (*International Crisis Group*

July 2011). Owing to the enduring stability of the Syrian state under the Asad regime, the prospects of creating and consolidating a strong Syrian identity were undermined by the Baath Party's very mottoes that advocated not national but supra-state, supranational identity and secularism, which served to legitimate a minority regime. Over the years, the regime became increasingly cosmopolitan and severely neglected its original, rural, base of support. For many in Damascus, Aleppo and other well-off cities on the coastal side of the country, the popular uprising was a threat to their status and life.

Personalized rule in Syria was similar to Gaddafi's rule in Libya. Gaddafi, too, did not invest in institution- and state building projects. Yet, unlike Syria, Libya was not dominated by an ideological ruling political party that would claim a broad base of political support. Instead, Ghaddafi consolidated his rule by dispensing patronage to kin and clan (Anderson 1990; Vandewalle 1998). Unlike Syria before the 2011 uprising, moreover, Libyan society's extensive reliance on kinship networks for access to goods and services shaped a structure of concentrated and exclusive power. To sustain that structure of power, Gaddafi manipulated and fractured society along tribal, geographical and social class lines (Baxly 2011; Lacher 2011) and weakened and divided state institutions to preempt the rise of other centers of power. Even the military was deliberately kept weak, ill-equipped and de-politicized. Instead of assigning security tasks to the armed forces, the Gaddafi regime created security service sectors. Hence, the military easily split when the "Libyan Spring" commenced. As a result, it might be argued, Gaddafi's state/regime capacity was almost non-existent compared to Asad's so that a grave crisis produced a disunited regime quickly deserted by state institutions to which the regime had very weak links. With that, the Ghaddafi regime had no institutions that

could co-opt its opponents to secure its survival. Whereas Asad's careful design of loyal state institutions prevented the rise of institutional defections, Ghaddafi's reliance on tribal alliances came to an end as entire tribes defected and gave momentum to the uprising in 2011.

Perhaps not coincidentally, post-Gaddafi Libya lacks a strong institutionalized regime that bears some continuity between the regime's executive institutions and the transitional authorities. For that matter, the legacy of Gaddafi's patronage politics has aggravated the regional division between the privileged and the neglected. After his fall, Gaddafi's former power and authority was diffused to local power centers that now vie for power at local and national levels (Sawani 2012). Consequently, transition in Libya has not led to political contestation over drafting a Constitution, say, or controlling state institutions. Rather the contestation revolves around resources and political power. To that extent, there is no explicit ideological conflict between Islamists and non-Islamists in Libya. Here, Islamists were not institutionally embedded in society and state as in Egypt where the MB long operated as a social movement running charity works and building support networks (Wickham 2002). Under Ghaddafi, outright repression choked off all expressions of political pluralism and civil society, including those of Islamists. In fact, Islamists do not do well in tribal society where tribal identity supersedes ideology and voting is more likely to follow tribal rather than ideological lines. To that extent, strong tribal alliances in Libya diminished the MB's chances in post-Gaddafi elections (St John 2013). Moreover, in the Libyan civil war that ousted Gaddafi, the Islamists were tainted for being influenced by external quarters, especially Qatar. As for elections, Libyans tended to vote along local, personality

and familial lines (Holm 2013: 41) even if they were now free to build a state without being hindered by inherited institutions.

In the absence of institutional contestation in Syria and Libya, then, the trajectory of uprising shifted towards violence and civil war over resources and power. Still there were differences. Libyan society was religiously and ethnically homogeneous and warlords were not common because regional actors were not as heavily involved in Libya. In contrast, warlords benefit from the regional struggle over Syria, strengthening their personal armies with more manpower and equipment. These warlords mobilize along sectarian and religious lines to spread their regional dominance. There are other important differences. Libya is an oil state where patronage patterns can easily emerge to empower militias at local levels. In addition, the Libyan uprising was rooted in territorial divisions which facilitated the emergence of rebel-held territory. In contrast, the nationwide institutionalization of the Syrian regime allowed Assad to overcome the problems of territory and geographic expansion. Thus, Gaddafi's regime could not extend its violence to opposition-controlled areas and delegitimize rebel administration of liberated areas. Put another way, Assad could and did inflict high levels of collective punishment extensively, an 'achievement' that eluded Gaddafi.

In addition, the high probability of military intervention in Libya boosted the prospect of ousting Gaddafi whereas both armed rebels and civilian opposition forces in Syria did not have the same option. Although both Syrian and Libyan rebels were initially seen to be incapable of waging war, international support and relatively early external intervention gave the Libyan rebels shared identity and momentum. In Syria international actors hesitated to take a firm stance against the regime. The strength of the Syrian army could not be underestimated. The

experiences in imposing regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq had also caused potential intervening parties to be wary of the rise of Jihadists. The material costs of intervention would also be very high and Syria had no oil reserves that could be tapped to offset the costs.

Finally, there are important regional factors. The Asad regime has cultivated relations with strong allies in the region for decades (Goodarz 2006). Gaddafi's regime, however, frequently changed its foreign policies, making it difficult to have strong regional allies (Solomon 2005). Besides, the Levant is a region that has been strenuously contested by international and regional actors. In the past century, the dividing lines have been almost unchanged for a Pro-West camp and an Anti-West camp. Furthermore, Western recognition and United Nations support (1973) to intervene and protect civilians of the anti-Gaddafi's National Transition Council withdrew legitimacy from the regime and defined and unified rebel groups. In Syria, the militarization and mobilization of the opposition forces were thought to be inadequate vis-à-vis the regime. Moreover, ethnic heterogeneity prevented the rebels from controlling and exploiting regions for military gains. Whereas Asad's supporters are unified in backing his regime and its institutions, ill-defined rebel groups fragmented along regional, ethnic and sectarian lines lack sustained popular support. And the uprising has been discredited too, because of the portrayal of the civil war by external actors and media as a sectarian conflict.

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