Democratic Waves and the Arab Uprisings

Shimaa Hatab, Cairo University[1]

Regime transitions around the world over the last five decades have been marked by repeated democratic waves cascading over different regions. The Third Wave (1974–88), the Post-Soviet and Sub-Sahara Africa Wave (1989–94), the Color Revolutions (2000–2007), and the Arab Uprisings (2010–11) each featured linked contentious episodes stemming from cross-border contagion which pushed through radical changes. Tunisia ignited the Arab uprisings that spilled over borders to drive major regime challenges in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen and significant protests in most other Arab countries. This "diffusion" processes caught scholars by surprise, as a region that had defied the previous three global waves of democratization suddenly witnessed massive protests that toppled long-standing autocrats and opened horizons for regime transitions.

A decade's perspective shows that the cross-border Arab torrent of mass protest produced diverse political trajectories. While it led to a smooth political transition in Tunisia, within a few short years popular movements gave rise to a new authoritarian crackdown in Egypt and brutal civil wars in Syria, Libya and Yemen.[2] The crushing of the "Arab Spring" spurred scholars to reproduce arguments about the robustness of authoritarianism in the region, with many explanations emphasizing either the predominance of Islamists in the opposition or the heavy presence of coercive apparatuses.[3] However, those analyses underestimate the importance of political dynamics and actors' choices. Those choices made at a critical time of political turmoil set the transition path, generating recurring patterns of behavior and shaping the context and the pace of regime change. Looking at the experience of other regional protest waves, and their diverse transition outcomes, can usefully inform our understanding of and explanations for the Arab experience over the last decade.

Waves of Transition

In the democratic waves that swept Latin America, Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, the balance of power and the strategic interactions between regime incumbents and

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[1] Cairo University. Email: shimaa.hatab@gmail.com

[2] Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[3] Lisa Blaydes and James Lo, "One man, one vote, one time? A model of democratization in the Middle East," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 24, no. 1(2012):110-146; Steven Heydeman and Reinoud Leenders, "Authoritarian Learning and Counterrevolution," in *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Marc Lynch (NY: Columbia University Press, 2014) pp. 75–92; Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East Lessons from the Arab Spring," *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 127-149; Hazem Kandil, *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

opposition contenders played a crucial role in the outcome of regime transitions. Transitologists have considered concluding a pact between "moderate" opposition and "soft-liners" of old regime as an "efficacious" strategic choice that historically led to faster and stable transitions.[4] The "collapse" mode of transition that broke with old regime holdovers and adopted non-negotiable approach to power struggle had more variegated effects on transition, depending on the extent of incumbents' control over the military establishment and the degree of cohesion and the organizational capacity of the oppositional forces.

The Arab uprisings bear resemblances to these historical global waves of democratization. As in Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, some confrontations between old elites and rising oppositions resulted in durable transitions, while others ended in protracted conflicts or with one side able to prevail unilaterally, to impose its terms of regime transitions or to block the transition process altogether.[5] In Egypt, the underlying stalemate produced a short-lived "pacted" transition and aborted democratic transformation, but confrontation between a cross-ideological opposition alliance and old powerholders enabled durable regime change in Tunisia. In Syria and Yemen, the stalemate resulted in escalated armed conflicts between diverse sects and ethnicities and stalled regime change.

The divergent routes of changes after the eruption of protests in the Arab region are in fact typical of the outcome of protest waves in other regions and historical eras. They show that neither an exclusive focus on the balance of power between incumbents and oppositions to facilitate "pact-making" transition nor the unproblematized account of oppositions' cohesion to tip the balance of power in their favor offers satisfactory explanations for the conditions under which different regime transition outcomes emerged. The variegated trajectories of the Arab uprisings redirect attention to *opposition-opposition bargains* in an ideologically bifurcated structure to interrogate oppositions' choices of cross-ideological coordination (or lack thereof) and their relations with regime incumbents who retain *de facto* or *de jure* power resources. The military is an especially critical actor in such situations, with its availability as a veto player or potential ally shaping the calculations and expectations of both former elites and different factions within oppositions during the uncertain period of regime changes.

The Democratization Literature

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[4] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Michael Burton, Richard Gunther, and John Higley, "Introduction: Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes," in *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*, eds. John Higley and Richard Gunther (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

[5] Michael Bratton M and Nicolas Van De Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jon Elester (ed.), *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).

The previous waves of democratization resulted in a large body of democratization literature that offers a thorough examination of the causes of authoritarian breakdown. An influential stream in these studies focuses on the lingering effects of the preceding type of authoritarian regime and the modes of transition (negotiated, transplacement, transaction, rupture, extrication) on the institutional features of the emerging regimes, patterns of elite competitions and prospects for future stability of democratic rules.[6] The pathbreaking study of Linz and Stepan,[7] for example, distinguished between different regime types that delineated possibilities and limits of regime transitions and democratic consolidation in Southern Europe, South America and the post-Soviet bloc. Authoritarian regimes with limited pluralistic feature may allow some space for democratic opposition with organizational and ideological capacities to develop and to push for the establishment of autonomous authority within parameters of democratic institutions after regime breakdown. Likewise, "mature post-totalitarian" regimes with limited pluralism within state apparatuses and restricted constitutional and legal guarantees may give rise to possible collective leadership to guide incipient societal opposition and instill different ideology in society. On the contrary, the total absence of autonomous political society and legal and constitutional rules in "totalitarian" and "sultanistic" regimes push rulers of these regimes to build their legitimacy on either monolithic ideology and strong leadership in the former, or on the whims of personalistic authority in the latter. In such regimes, the bar of establishing democratic rules is particularly high as they lack any prior experience in organized oppositions and universalistic legal practices or norms.

This body of literature offered compelling arguments which analyze the consequences of historical legacies of the preceding regime type beyond its own life, showing the effect of "modes" of transition on prospects of short-term stability or long-term consolidation (with a prime focus on the position of the military institution and the eradication of its reserve domains of unchecked power that preclude civilian control over the military). The institutional historical legacies approach does not, however, explain why actors chose particular strategies that facilitate transition in the first place and how such choices made during a short length of time had lasting effect on the stability of the emerging regimes.

A "strategic choice" approach to democratization therefore emerged, which highlights actors' agency, choices, expectations and behavior that enable transition after the collapse of authoritarian regimes. These studies represent a step away from the grip of historical legacies and instead see democratic consolidation or failure as outcomes of elite compromises and negotiations. The "strategic choice" model examines how uncertainty about the balance of power between "incumbents" and "oppositions" may enable "pacted

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[6] Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore and London: The
Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Gerardo L. Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, "Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3
(1997): 343-362.
[7] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*.

transition" and stabilize the newly emerging regime.[8] The strategies and tactics of "soft-liners" of the old ruling bloc and "moderate" opposition (as principal players) to strike a power-sharing deal and limit the policy agenda received the most theoretical attention.[9]

This scholarly work, however, has three main shortcomings: *First*: "strategic choice" studies tend to limit the analytical focus to a few cases in Latin America and Eastern Europe that followed the paradigmatic model of the Spanish transition and offer deterministic account for the irreversible path of successful regime transition as an outcome of the pact between regime's "soft-liners" and a "moderate" opposition. The conventional pact-making model emerged firstly in Spain with the *Pacto de Moncloa* that embodied elite accommodation between the conservative incumbents and the leftist opposition.[10] Such pacted transitions heralded regime transitions in a few Latin American countries (Venezuela, Colombia, and to some extent in Brazil)[11] and Eastern Europe (Poland and Hungary where the Solidarity movement and Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) led the negotiations with the communist incumbents).[12] Contrary to this conventional wisdom, "pacted transition" that featured elite reconciliations between the Brotherhood and the military in Egypt did not produce stabilized democracy. The ideological polarization and tense struggle between Islamists and non-Islamist oppositions led to a military coup and nipped democratic experiment in the bud. Historically, agreement on neutralizing extremists and hardliners of old regime forces (the military in Spain), the moderating role of the military during the transition period (Poland), and the return of the military to the barracks (Latin America) or revocation of its intervention in politics (the Warsaw pact countries and Southern Europe) relinquished a grip of the coercive apparatus on power and changed the strategic environment within which pivotal players made their choices and calculations about regime transition.

Second: "strategic choice" studies tend to deal with the "moderate" opposition as a coherent camp acting as an organic whole and having a stake in excluding extremists and concluding an agreement with the regime's "soft-liners". The heavy emphasis on elite compromises

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[8] Burton, Gunther, and Higley, Introduction: Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes; Terry Karl, "Petrolum
and Political Pacts: The Transition to Democracy in Venezuela," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule Latin America*, eds. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 3-18; Dankwart A. Rostow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (1970): 337-363; O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*; Michael McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in
the Post-communist World," *World Politics* 54, no. 2 (2002): 212-244.

[9] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*; Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[10] Munck and Leff, "Modes of Transition and Democratization".

[11] Karl, "Petrolum and Political Pacts"; Frances Hagopian, "Democracy by Undemocratic Means'?: Elites, Political
Pacts, and Regime Transition in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies* 23, no. 2 (1990): 146-170.

[12] Elester, *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*.

between old forces and pro-democracy oppositions sapped their ability to develop the most obvious perspective of scope conditions under which diverse (if not divided) opposition groups coordinate across social and/or ideological cleavages. The lure of attaining office may discourage opposition politicians to back one another to pry power from old power centers. In the historical instances that led successful pact model of transition, warring elites of different oppositional camps had to overcome either historical animosity and ideological divisions (in Latin America) or disorganization and fragmentation (in Eastern Europe) as a steppingstone towards entering into a deal with regime's "soft-liners." For example, the *Colorados* and the *Blancos* in Uruguay had to coordinate efforts to reach an agreement with the military on presidential candidacy in the "Naval Club Pact" and avoid the type of polarization that had previously paved the way for the military coup in 1973.[13] Similarly, in Chile the Socialists and the Christian Democrats overcame their mutual recriminations over the breakdown of democracy in 1973 and joined the center-left coalition—*Concertación*— to dislodge the military dictator in the plebiscite of 1988.[14] Finally, in Argentina, old warring elites of the Radical Civic Union (UCR) and the *Peronist* (PJ) party joined the *Multipartidaria* in 1981 to pressure the military dictatorship and create a national reconciliation that would establish a democratic regime.[15]

Opposition forces in the Soviet bloc had to organize themselves from scratch to tilt the balance of power in favor of the growing anti-communist oppositions in 1989. In Poland, for example, the Solidarity movement drew together militant trade unionists and radical generation that pushed for the negotiation with the Communist party to gain legal recognition and strike a power-sharing deal. Also, in Hungary, loose alliance of ecologists, journalists, reform economists, independent student and worker organizations formed urban-based liberal groupings that organized into political parties in the late 1980s to increase their tactical bargaining capacity vis-à-vis the reformist Communist leaders.[16]

Similarly, in the Arab region, only Tunisia heeded a lesson of enduring regime transition stemmed from the formation of cross-ideological alliance between opposition groups. Islamist and secular forces extended beyond ideological differences and concluded a deal of power sharing to holdup democratic institutions. The *Troika* government comprising Islamist Ennahda and two secular partners, the *Congrès pour le République* (CPR) and *Ettakatol party* steered a rocky path to transition (with one step forward and two steps back) between 2011 and 2013 and laid the groundwork for peaceful alternation of power.

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[13] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 158.

[14] Gerardo L. Munck and Jeffrey A. Bosworth, "Patterns of Representation and Competition: Parties and Democracy
in Post-Pinochet Chile," *Party Politics* 4, no. 4 (1988): 471-493.

[15] Gerardo L. Munck, *Authoritarianism and Democratization: Soldiers and Workers in Argentina, 1976-1984* (The
University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1988).

[16] Elster, *The Roundtable Talks*; Michael Bernhard, "The Moore thesis: what's left after 1989?," *Democratization* 23,
no. 1(2015): 118-140.

Third: stalemated power relations between the regime incumbents and growing social and political opposition did not necessarily push warring sides to get to the negotiation table in East Europe and Sub-Sahara Africa.[17] In some contexts, polarization between incumbents and oppositions precluded concessionary tendencies and enhanced a winner-take-all approach to conflict resolution. The intricate transition path in many Eastern European cases that entailed democratic reforms, market liberalization and multi-ethnic state formation eroded possibilities of negotiations and reconciliations. The organizational capacity of democratic oppositions in some of the Warsaw pact countries and intensity of disputes over territorial domains and nation-state building after the disintegration of the Soviet Union tempted anti-communist forces into believing that they could prevail unilaterally and impose their first best preferences (as it happened in the Baltic countries and Czechoslovakia).[18] Moreover, transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa unfolded along a path of escalating confrontations between personalist "strong-men" and oppositions until one side or other prevailed and achieved a decisive victory. While South Africa and Zambia achieved a smooth transition and well-organized opposition forces succeeded in wrestling power from old incumbents, stalemated power relations engendered prolonged conflicts in Angola, Kenya, Liberia and Mozambique and enabled old incumbents to outmaneuver disorganized opposition and hobble the democratization efforts in Nigeria, Burundi, Cape Verde, Lesotho, and Seychelles.[19]

In the Arab countries, the confrontational stance with the old regime produced durable regime transition only in Tunisia, thanks to the opposition coordination that crafted new institutionalized democratic practices. Contrarily, stalemated power position between incumbents and fragmented opposition precluded regime changes in Syria that lapsed into protracted civil war and obstructed durable regime transition in Yemen that descended into civil disorder.

Opposition-Opposition Bargains and Transitions

The lacuna in the available literature stems from taking opposition as a unified given and focusing exclusively on the implications of its choices in a power stalemated situation for the transition process. It is unclear why some opposition actors opted to coordinate effort and enter into a pact with old regime figures and why others ever chose to turn on each other. The Arab uprisings showed the necessity of focusing the analysis not only on the interaction between incumbents and oppositions, but also between ideologically different oppositions and its implications for regime transitions. Pivoting the focus to opposition-opposition bargains contextualizes actors' choices in conflict-ridden situations and establishes the endogeneity of their preferences as they were shaped and reshaped by actors' political calculations and cognitive responses to the unfolding political processes.

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[17] Except South Africa Mandela's national reconciliation approach and wide appeal for moderates on all sides reinforced prospects of negotiated solutions and reaching multiracial agreement and formation of national unity government.

[18] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*.

[19] Bratton and Van De Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*.

Few studies in the democratization literature spotlight the role of oppositions in blocking regime changes or undermining nascent democratic regimes. One strand in this tradition focuses on the implications of beliefs and attitudes of politicians after losing founding elections.[20] These few writings shift the focus away from winners' commitments to democratic norms and bring out losers' expectations and commitment to the rules of the game, especially when the founding elections result in a clear redistribution of power resources. A second stream focuses on ideological polarization between opposing political parties[21] and its consequences for democratic sustainability or breakdown. These scholarly works depart from Sartori (1976)'s notion of polaitzation and highlight the necessary presence of "centrist" forces to absorb centrifugal tendencies and to keep the regime from falling apart.[22] These studies, however, did not offer thorough examination of diverse trajectories resulted from losers' disillusionment with democratic rules and deepening ideological polarization. That is, why these conditions led to abortive or blocked transitions in some contexts and facilitated transition or prevented democratic breakdown in others. Historically, when neither side of warring elites has had the capacity to achieve its first preferences through the use of force, the rival forces have opted for negotiated settlements and put the military's coercive potential out of action.

The military is a critical actor in conflict dynamics during regime changes. In Latin America, armies played the arbitrator role throughout the 1960s and 1970s to solve disputes between leftist and rightist forces who could not settle for rules to overcome distributional and ideological conflicts. Leftist forces were portrayed as "totalitarians in disguise" that pushed powerful elites —always doubtful of leftists' commitment to democratic governance— to mobilize supporters and incite the military to overthrow elected leftist governments. The withdrawal of the military from the political scene and its return to the barracks altered actors' calculations and stabilized democratic rules during the third wave of democratization that swept the western hemisphere in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, in Eastern European transitions, Mikhail Gorbachev's endorsement of domestic reforms eroded the "Brezhnev Doctrine" that historically justified Soviet military intervention in the Eastern block to forestall any threats to the Socialist order. Eroding the military veto of the Soviet Union empowered reformist leaders in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Baltic nations to tip the balance of power in favor of the anti-communist oppositions by mid-1989. Finally, in sub-Saharan Africa, although military coups have also been prominent, African armies have rarely acted as unified forces in reaction to or against pro-democracy opposition. The military institutions have evolved into neo-patrimonial structures that lacked wide bases of social support and riven by political factionalism based on both personal ties with ambitious officers and ethnic solidarities in the ranks. The subversion threat came primarily from the military acting

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[20] Christopher J. Anderson, et al., *Losers' Consent: Elections and Democratic Legitimacy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[21] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*; Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[22] Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

alone to block democratic reforms and/or support incumbents who refused to accede to voters' verdict and stimulated conflicts to rescind the results of the founding elections.[23]

The presence of the military as a veto player and/or viable interlocutor for different oppositional camps, therefore, complicates actors' calculations, alters the incentive structures and tempts actors to enter into a deal with the veto power to forcibly block or reverse the least preferable course of action. The Arab uprisings illustrate how oppositions' cost-benefit calculations of regime transition in an ideologically divided landscape of power struggles are conditioned by *first*, the balance of forces between different ideological camps (most notably, Islamists and non-Islamists); and *second*, by the presence or absence of the military as an active veto player that regulates courses of regime transitions and controls the political process. The Brotherhood in Egypt opted for a domineering approach and the presence of the military as an active veto actor in Egypt stripped actors of the independent ability to introduce institutional provisions and actively shaped their preferences. The continued dependence of opposition groups (Islamists and non-Islamists alike) on the military accentuated polarization and pushed non-Islamists to adjudicate to the military to curtail the democratic bargain. Conversely, in Tunisia, the relative balance of power between rival oppositional forces and the absence of robust veto players old powerholders pushed the oppositions to establish durable institutional rules. Counterintuitively, divided oppositions (along sectarian lines in Syria or sectarian and tribal lines in Yemen) in asymmetrical power structure (with the absence of the military acting cohesively as a veto actor or as decisively defected units with hierarchical command chain in support of anti-regime protests), radicalized insurgent groups who aspired to prevail unilaterally and restructure the state apparatuses.

Contextualizing opposition-opposition bargains during uncertain periods of regime transition is thus a critical dimension in unpacking the multiple routes of the Arab uprisings. Opposition calculations about immediate and future benefits, alongside existential fears of possible eruption of violence in the future, are centered on a politics of uncertainty[24] that affects their strategic choices of coordination, collusion and/or insurgency. I argue that uncertainty during a transitional period unfolds as a three-level game between opposition groups. The first concerns *uncertainty* about the *balance of power* between them that affects their immediate political calculations, choices, expectations and reactions to unfolding processes. Symmetrical balance of power between opposition actors during transition affects their electoral tactics (either to form an electoral coalition or prevail unilaterally) and lessens concerns about the short and long-term payoffs and possible chances of winning in future. In Tunisia, the relative distribution of power resources among Islamists and non-Islamists gave assurances that no party could unilaterally make binding decisions and rival forces ushered in institutional and constitutional transformations that staved off a possible overwhelming victory for the Islamic parties. In Egypt, however, the Brotherhood moved in a more self-assertive direction, dwarfed their ideological opponents and imposed itself (together with ultra-

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[23] Bratton and Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa.*

[24] Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

conservative *salafis* groups) as a predominant electoral force with no need to share power with non-Islamist forces.

The second involves *uncertainty* about the *future stability of institutional rules* as the institutionalization of competition rules serves as "coordinating device" for conflict resolution. Institutionalized rules emerge when power resources are sufficiently dispersed to restrain players from unilaterally crushing their opponents or changing the competition rules to keep unfavorable parties from taking office in future. Availability of veto player in the form of regime holdovers confounds interactions between relevant actors and complicates oppositions' strategies to cope with unpredictable institutional outcomes. Actors face choices of either to collude with the veto player to terminate their conflict or to establish durable rules of conflict resolution. In Egypt, the landslide victory of the Islamic parties and, most notably, the unpredictable political weight of the *salafis* aggravated the centrifugal tendencies between the ideologically antagonistic forces and raised doubts about the Islamists' future intents. The active political role of the military cajoled losers to adjudicate to it to remove the Brotherhood president from power. On the contrary, with the absence of robust veto player, all oppositional forces in Tunisia struck a power-sharing deal to subject their interests and values to the uncertain operations of democratic institutions and to dissuade unilateral defections from the democratic bargain. All opposing forces established institutional mechanisms for mediation and crisis management to keep the process from going off the rails and the *Troika* government stepped down in 2013 to dispel the phantom of social violence and disorder.

The third level entails *uncertainty* about *existential threats* as perceptions of possible eruption of violence in future may incentivize different actors to endorse offensive and insurrectional strategy to reduce danger and/or attack previously identified enemies. Security threats (whether based on non-instrumental emotions such as fears, hatred or resentment in contexts of power differentiation between "in-group" and "out-group" members[25] (as it has been the case between Sunni and Alawi in Syria) or on instrumental emotions triggered by elites' control of information or propaganda machine (as it was the case in Egypt during the short tenure of Brotherhood in office in 2012-2013) may push opposition actors to radicalize the political landscape and/or to collude with the *ancien régime* to preserve or restore the *status quo ante*. In Syria, the Alawites' (as a minority sect) monopoly over power pushed the majority Sunni to adopt militancy strategy in response to Al-Asaad's offensive military operations to lethally subdue -what the regime dubbed- Sunni "terrorists."[26] Additionally, in Egypt, the fear of the Islamists' perpetual grip on power and possible eruption of societal and sectarian violence (with the accentuation of polarization and identity differences) pushed opposition politicians to band together and mobilize large

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[25] Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27–47; Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (MIT: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[26] Paulo Gabriel Hilu Pinto, "The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict," in *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, eds. Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 123-142; Marc Lynch. *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016).

swathes of the population to support the military effort at deposing the Islamist president.[27]

To recap, politics of uncertainty about power relations between oppositions and about future sustainability of the new institutional rules and social stability help to unify and integrate questions and insights about regime transitions. It is the mutual recognition of the balance of forces and expectations of possible future stability and chances of winning in electoral contestation for multiple actors, as well as the cognitive formulation of boundaries of political action that establish stable "equilibria" for regime transition (a point at which all parties push through regime changes and no party has an incentive to move back to the authoritarian era). Cross-regional comparisons with Latin America offer interesting examples of regime transitions to test how politics of uncertainty and the dilemma of "uncommitted opposition" are solved over time by excavating how antagonistic ideological forces evolved and shifted ideological positions or orientations over time, neutralized the military and developed commitment to democracy.

Shimaa Hatab, Cairo University, shimaa.hatab@gmail.com

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[27] Shimaa Hatab, "Threat Perception and Democratic Support in Post - Arab Spring Egypt," *Comparative Politics*
53, no. 1 (2020): 69 – 98