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Perspectives for change in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria: the military factor and implications of previous authoritarian regimes

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This article argues that differences in Arab authoritarian regimes were mainly linked to the relationship between the state, the political party in power and the military. By exploring such differences in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria prior to the 2011 crisis, they are explained in the context of the political changes that ensued in the wake of the crisis. How the army played the dual role of instigating change while impeding it at crucial points in the transitional process is described. The mutual lack of autonomy between the state, the party and the military appears to have been a key factor in impeding change, whereas a clear separation of the functions of these institutions was more likely to enable political change to come about.

Keywords: Arab regimes; regime change; democracy; authoritarianism; ruling coalition; the army

Introduction

For a long time, Arab authoritarianism has defied the ‘transition paradigm’ (Carothers 2002). This paradigm is essentially based on some agreed beliefs: that transition to democracy is a teleological and universal trend; that transition inevitably leads to democracy, that the determinative impact of elections and underlying conditions such as history, institutional legacies and other ‘structural’ features are of little significance (Carothers 2002, 6–8). In contrast to this paradigm, Arab authoritarian regimes in the 1990s, when initiating some kind of economic liberalization, proved to be resilient. They were able to master the effects of liberalization by controlling opposition movements and co-opting crucial emerging actors (Hinnebusch 2006, 383–386; Gerschewski 2013). Coalitions in power were moulded by the new challenges; however, their essential tenets remained unchanged. Notwithstanding the need to acquire an electoral legitimization, powerful parties continued to dominate the party system. Although economic liberalization encouraged the private sector, bureaucracies remained large and the state continued to be the most important economic driver. The omnipresent military apparatuses continued to carry on their duties by repressing dissent (Bellin 2004). These were common traits among republican Arab regimes. Variations mainly concerned the relations between these aspects. In some cases, the army prevailed; in others, bureaucracies ensured the continuance and the legitimacy of the authoritarian rule, and, generally speaking, parties in power declined as decision-makers while preserving an appeal for ordinary people seeking, through patronage,

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direct relations with the state. Nonetheless, at least one core assumption of the transition paradigm proved to be true: in a world increasingly marked by democratic legitimacy and accountability, the same regimes had lost their populist appeal. Combined with a problem of succession – at least in Egypt and Tunisia – popular demands, which arose during the Arab uprising, really highlighted a profound lack of legitimacy.

Hence, in 2011, popular demands culminated into explosive insurrection and the once long-surviving regimes were shattered. In January 2011, Ben Ali was ousted from power. A similar outcome occurred in February, in Egypt, while popular protests in Syria, after being ferociously repressed, ended up in a bloody civil war that, so far, has cost more than 100,000 lives. After unleashing political change and resurgence of free party politics, transitions towards democracy, in Tunisia and Egypt, have been somewhat different. In January 2014, after more than two years of debate and two transitional governments, Tunisia finally succeeded in approving a new constitution, while in Egypt, a military coup in July 2013 definitively blocked the long-standing Islamic opposition party's path to power, and profoundly changed the democratic perspective of such transition. How can these variations be explained? Why does transition slowly continue in Tunisia while in Egypt it lags behind? Why has Syria sunk into a bloody civil war? Are popular demands able to bring Arab authoritarianism to an end and fully re-establish the 'transition paradigm', or will such regimes ever again be able to survive the new challenges?

By describing the differences in authoritarian rule prior to the 2011 crisis, this article attempts to explain variations in their outcome. The cases have been selected according to some common features. First, they all were republics.¹ Second, contrary to most Arab monarchies, these were not rentier states (Beblawi and Luciani 1987). Even if it is true that some pursued a 'rentier strategy', this was applied in a period when rents were in decline, and were no longer enough to ensure the maintenance of the regime, but yet were still sufficient enough to curb dissent.² Third, and most important, they all displayed, with variations, a strong interrelationship ('fusion') between what is considered here as the pillars of coalitions in power, i.e. the state machine, the party in power and the military/repressive apparatuses. Such an interrelationship evolved over the years but remained significant at the beginning of the crisis,³ while having an adverse effect on the ensuing outcomes.

The key to understanding differences in outcome following the uprisings is, therefore, what has been labelled here as 'fusion' at the top of organizations that were part of the ruling coalition.⁴ Elsewhere such fusion has been called intra-elite cohesion (Gerschewski 2013, 16). The meaning is roughly the same. However, as will be seen below, 'fusion' was also a way to operationalize cohesion. Where fusion was evident, transition towards democracy proved difficult and the only way out seemed to be, at least in the Syrian case, a dramatic regime change. Such an outcome is consistent with the ample literature on persisting authoritarianism in the region, prior to the 2011 crisis. Whether the Arab uprising has just weakened the ability of Arab authoritarianism to survive such challenges or not is a matter of discussion, and ample literature has been produced on the subject in the last two years (e.g. Barany 2011; Bellin 2012; Hinnebusch 2013). Therefore, there will not be much focus here on the implications of the Arab uprising on Arab authoritarianism except in the conclusions. 'Fusion' had also another advantage: it sheds light on the mutual lack of autonomy between institutions. It is not only a matter of how broad were the interests on which ruling coalitions were built – the larger the coalition is, the bigger the possibility is to resist attempts at reform (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999) – but how far such

institutions were institutionalized, i.e. ‘autonomous’ (Huntington 1968, 12–24). Here it is argued that weak institutions are a feeble support to reform once transition is initiated.

This article fits in what has been defined as the ‘neo-institutionalist approach’ (March and Olsen 1984). It is strongly believed that structures and organizations do count in surviving crisis because they manage to maintain their own position and they are instrumental in determining whether transition occurs and the direction it takes, as well as how certain solutions are avoided while others are privileged. Based on such a path-dependent perspective (Mahoney 2000), it is, therefore, possible to identify the direction the transition will eventually take.⁵

The paper proceeds as follows. The following section examines the literature on the persistence of authoritarianism in the region. Several themes have been identified: first, the ‘neo-institutionalist approach’ and the ‘rational choice approach’ (Hinnebusch 2006, 373); and second, the historical literature on Arab authoritarianism. The third section briefly deals with the methodology used. The paper will illustrate how the problem operationalizing and measuring the categories is solved. The fourth section is mainly a narrative of the three regimes before their crisis, analogies and differences. It investigates relations between the military apparatuses, the state and the party. In this analysis, the three regimes are divided according to the weight of these ‘pillars’. In particular, by following Huntington (1968, 12–24), it is possible to ‘measure’ the degree of institutionalization of these three pillars. The fifth section discusses the effect of economic liberalization since the 1990s (the 2000s in the case of Syria). Its impact has either endangered – at least partially – the weight of the military apparatus (in Egypt and Syria), or downsized the redistributive ability of the state (in all cases). In the conclusion, some general evaluations of the possibility of a positive outcome will be drawn by considering how transition had been started. It can be anticipated that, apart from the analogies, differences proved to be significant and, at least in the Tunisian case, the lesser weight of the military makes a democratic evolution more likely, whereas the absence, or only partial separation between the state and the military, makes this perspective more uncertain in the other two cases.

Institutional causes of persisting authoritarianism and their effects after its breakdown

The crisis of authoritarianism was hastened by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The end of the Communist regimes intensified the problem of legitimization of authoritarianism, in a world increasingly marked by the acceptance of democratic values (Huntington 1991, 45). Since then, democracy has become the most widespread political regime. The Arab political systems, after an initial and very partial liberalization at the beginning of the 1990s (Salamé 1994), were exceptions (Stepan and Robertson 2004; Diamond 2010).

Why Arab authoritarian regimes have lasted so far has been a matter of thorough investigation. Hinnebusch (2006), in a review of the literature on the theme, identifies a series of theoretical and explanatory approaches spanning from early modernization theory to the impact of globalization and liberalization. Most of the more recent approaches are convincing and corroborate each other. However, while the importance of external factors as an important tool for authoritarian resilience in the region is not discharged – what Hinnebusch (2006, 373) considers the ‘international variable’ – for present purposes this paper concentrates on the internal factors. Up to the beginning of 2011, ‘internal variables’ did indeed prove to be strong, or adaptable enough to resist

change in a world that is increasingly intolerant of authoritarianism.⁶ Two theoretical approaches are followed here: ‘neo-institutionalist’ and ‘rational choice’ (Hinnebusch 2006, 380, 387). While the former argues that authoritarian regimes differ according to their level of institutionalization, i.e. institutions have a stabilizing effect, the ‘rational choice’ approach highlights the mutual role of elites, which are at the core of any authoritarian regime, their intra-play and mutual dependence and/or competition.⁷ The latter also helps to explain why democratic transition is either avoided or welcomed at crucial points when it results from elite calculation.

Both approaches have benefitted from several contributions notably by O’Donnell’s *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism* (1973). The ‘neo-institutionalist’ approach has been enriched by a multitude of authors including Perlmutter (1981), who clearly argues how it is organization rather than ideology to which authoritarian regimes owe their continuance and durability. Moreover, according to March and Olsen (1984) institutionalism emphasizes the relative autonomy of political institutions. Most of the recent neo-institutionalist literature focuses on how the role of the dominant party and fake elections have a stabilizing effect on autocratic rule (Schedler 2006; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). The role of the military, however, in such polities continues to hold importance, especially in the most interesting studies concerning the Middle East, even if most of them look only at single cases.⁸ Military interests proved to be adaptable enough to resist privatization (Heydemann 2004) through a false retreat from open politicization (Cook 2007). Historical sociological studies could also be included in the institutionalist perspective such as Ayubi’s *Overstating the Arab State* (2009), which is a historical reconstruction of the foundation of the ‘Arab’ state. Studies of this kind underline the importance of institutions in shaping authoritarianism. Such a perspective is also important in explaining authoritarian durability. Institutions are ‘captured’ by elites that become intra-elite cohesive extensions of the same elites (Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* 1999; Acemoglu, Egorov, and Sonin 2008). Their societal roots also contribute to explaining why it is so difficult for a counter-elite to emerge, or for enough people to mobilize to defy rulers in a setting that is mainly moulded by patronage networks. This is the contribution of the rational choice approach.

Both perspectives are retained here. In particular, the institutionalist perspective helps to explain that institutions do count. They also count in the outcomes once an authoritarian regime is in crisis or has toppled. Powerful parties can easily be disbanded, but they leave a vacuum in which former members, activists and ordinary citizens continue to ask for the same clientelistic policies, and large bureaucracies are necessary to continue to govern after a regime change has taken place (Karl and Schmitter 1991). New parties in government may arise and their primary concern is to win the confidence of the bureaucratic apparatuses as they try to ‘colonize’ them. Last but not least, powerful military apparatuses may retain the power of veto after transition is initiated, or may have interest in impeding the initiation of transition (Karl and Schmitter 1991).⁹

How far such institutions are tied is of the utmost importance as a factor in explaining the pattern transition follows. The key issues approached here, with attempts to address them, are whether transition had been initiated and encouraged and by whom, and what has been accomplished in the transition process so far. It is believed here that it is from the perspective of the existing relations among actors of former power coalitions, in particular, that it is possible to identify resources and constraints for transition. The importance of other functional or less functional factors that lead

to a democratic outcome – the duration of transition, the degree of violence before and during it, the role of civil actors, the degree of participation, etc. – variously described by others (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986; Hite and Morlino 2004) is not denied. However, it is valid to consider that the analysis of the *political coalition* behind established authoritarian regimes is, by itself, sufficient to outline the obstacles and resources. The description is, therefore, limited to a few factors that are more systematically treated here.

Methodology

Prior to early 2011, the political systems in Tunisia, Syria and Egypt shared some common features that made comparison easy. They included:

- The existence of a large-scale state establishment and bureaucracy that, despite recent downsizing and liberalization, at least in one case (Tunisia since the 1990s), retained decisive importance as a driving instrument for economic and social development.
- The existence of a hegemonic party (Sartori 1976) whose role was to co-opt elites and to exercise societal control.
- A crucial role assigned to the internal security apparatuses and/or a similar role to the military.

According to Hinnebusch (2006, 380), Middle East regimes took the form of 'Populist authoritarianism' (PA), when an alliance between the middle classes and peasants developed as a result of the struggle against old oligarchies. Such 'revolutions' were driven by the military and/or a single party and resulted in an expansion of the military and the bureaucracy which became the largest organizations in society. As a result of international pressure, and against the imperative of liberalization, by the 1980s PAs were transformed into 'post-populist authoritarian' regimes (PPA) (Hinnebusch 2006, 383–386). The adjustment to external challenges resulted in an oligarchical transformation where new oligarchies maintained their grip on the core of state activities and continued to co-opt the middle class through the promise of business opportunities. Hinnebusch deserves the credit for efficaciously summarizing the effect of liberalization on the political economy of the Arab state. This is consistent with a long list of contributions on the issue (Heydemann 2004; Haddad 2004; Stacher 2012). The type of transformation from PA to PPA, experienced by the state under liberalization, did indeed have profound implications, not only on the maintenance of some populist policies that maintained their importance for the legitimization of the state, but also especially on the triangular relations between the state, the hegemonic party and the military.

Given that authoritarianism developed in the Middle East at an early stage, common patterns of interplay between a powerful elite developed simultaneously to ensure their continuity in power. Hence, military personnel, bureaucrats, party leaders and, subsequently, businessmen all converged in finding ways to sustain each others' interests mutually, to the point of fusing together the organizations/institutions they governed. This produced an adverse effect on organizational autonomy, impacting strongly on the other three criteria of institutionalization of an organization, as described by Huntington (1968). These were their internal coherence, complexity and more importantly their adaptability. It is not so much a matter of how modern these institutions were, in

terms of technical capabilities but rather of their ability to respond to the new challenges that these regimes had to cope with, in the early part of 2011. In general, their ability proved to be poor, but it did vary, nonetheless, according to context and extent. While Syria slid into open repression and civil war, the other two initiated transition even if it was marked by a variation, as far as the position of the army, was concerned. The way institutional interplay occurred accounts for such variations. Since the breakdown or crisis of these regimes, other authors – Barany (2011), Lutterbeck (2011), Bellin (2012) – have been attempting to provide explanations for these differences. Their conclusions are mutually consistent with this article's. They all point to how crucial the military factor was; a factor also considered here to be at the very top of the triangular interplay between state, party and army. However, this paper's contribution is that of adding more substance to their arguments by treating such institutional interplay more methodically.

Generally speaking, having the monopoly of the means of legitimate violence, the army proved to be the strongest organization, while the parties proved to be the weakest. Parties maintained the role of the interface between the state and the people, but their role was generally downgraded as a result of the transformation from PA to PPA with bureaucracies remaining, notwithstanding privatization, an essential instrument of government. With the transformation from PA to PPA, the military preferred to maintain a 'behind the scenes' profile (Cook 2007). In some cases, however, they continued to keep important roles in the party, and a certain degree of control over the bureaucracy, mainly in key echelons, such as local governorship, or maintaining a reserved domain in the economy. In so doing, they continued to have a decisive influence on the economic policies enacted by governments (Cook 2007; Heydemann 2007; Richter 2007). These three pillars – party membership, control of governorships and the control over sectors of the economy – have been chosen as indicators of the weight of the army. This enables a description of the nature, and measurement of the degree, of the army's fusion with the other organizational domains prior to the crisis (Table 1), as well as the type of civil–military relations – a key factor strongly impacting on the ensuing type of transition. The results of the latter are summarized in Table 2.

These three pillars are decisive in understanding the direction taken during periods of transition, given that: (1) in the absence of a capable state, transitional change is more likely to be put at risk; (2) heavy military apparatuses can jeopardize or affect a decisive outcome; and (3) also former single/hegemonic parties can maintain a remarkable

Table 1. Extent of army fusion with the party, state bureaucracy and its role within the economic sector prior to the crisis.

With the state	With the party	In the economy
Are army members also governors (<i>wali</i>)?	Do army members have any political role in the party?	Are army members (including retired personnel) allowed to have any particular role in an economic sector?
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	No
No	Yes	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	No
No	No	Yes
No	Yes	No
No	No	No

Table 2. Political coalitions at the beginning of the crisis: fusion of the regime's pillars with the military apparatuses.

Country	State	Party	Economy
Egypt	Yes	No	Yes
Syria	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tunisia	No	No	No

conditioning power. Moreover, when parties in power are for the mostly 'clientelistic' when transitional change begins, they leave a void when banned that could easily be filled by new emerging parties with the same characteristics: territorial anchorage and capacity for mobilization and redistribution.¹⁰

Relationship between the army, bureaucracy and the party

All three regimes experienced a remarkable growth in state bureaucracy during the 1960s–70s (Owen 2004, 23–38). This was confirmed by central government expenditure (GDP). In Egypt, it grew from 18.3% in 1955, to 29.7% in 1960 to 55.7% in 1970. A similar growth was also recorded for Syria – from 23.5% in 1960 to 37.9% in 1970 – and for Tunisia – from 20.7% in 1960 to 40.7% in 1970 – during the same decade (Owen 2004, 25). Although in the Egyptian case this expenditure contracted during the 1980s, due to Sadat's liberalization policy (*infitah*), the weight of the state remained substantial; it peaked in 1992 at 57.5%.¹¹ Public employment was rated around 6 million during the 2000s (9.58% of the population and about one-third of total employees) with over 800,000 employees in the armed forces (one in every 84 citizens; 180,000 in 1966) and 150,000 in the police (UN-DPADM 2004).

The enlargement of state bureaucracy in Syria took place in the same decade: in 1960 the state employed 34,000 public employees. This number grew to 251,000 in 1975. Recent estimates counted about 1.2 million public employees, and an additional 400,000 retired people (Bar 2006, 427). To this should be added 180,000 men for the armed forces in the 1970s, a figure that grew to over 400,000 during the 2000s (one serviceman for every 43 citizens), representing about half of the entire workforce (25% in the Egyptian case).

Tunisia experienced an analogous process of expansion. Bureaucracy grew from 80,000 in 1960 to nearly half a million during the first half of the 1990s (including employees in state-controlled companies). However, since both Ben Ali and Bourguiba feared a possible coup d'état, and different from the cases described above, the army remained at a modest size. Before the crisis, it was about 47,000 servicemen (one in every 212 citizens). Nevertheless, internal security apparatuses – the *Sûreté nationale* – amounted to 50,000/80,000 men before regime breakdown in 2011. Only in Tunisia did the ratio between the armed forces and the police favoured the latter. This was due to the greater importance in the ruling coalition assigned to the Ministry of the Interior in the Tunisian case. Ben Ali himself came from the Ministry of the Interior and not from the military, as did Hafiz al-Assad and Mubarak.¹²

The three regimes shared the same *étatiste* profile (Ayubi 2009, 289–328),¹³ the central role played by the armed forces or, alternatively, the internal security apparatuses, and the leading role of the hegemonic party. For all of them, the party had acquired, during an early stage of state consolidation, a mobilizing role to become,

subsequently and gradually, a patronage machine. It has been both an instrument to co-opt elites by selecting new social criteria, and an instrument of societal control (Hibou 2006). Besides formal multipartitism – electoral processes lacked credibility – the Tunisian Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) (formerly the Socialist Destourian Party (PSD) under Bourguiba) actually maintained strong control over parliament. This was similar to the Egyptian National Democratic Party (NDP). It is hard to be convinced of the low formal affiliation to the Ba'ath in the Syrian parliament (54%). Only 14% was assigned to parties that were part of the National Progressist Front (*al-Jabha*) dominated by the Ba'ath, while the remainder were unaffiliated MPs who were subject to the approval of the same party.¹⁴ In all three cases, hegemonic parties had deeply penetrated the society through an all-pervading structure of local branches rewarding loyal citizens with resource redistribution. Some evaluations put a figure of 1 million registered members for the Tunisian PSD around the mid-1980s (Camau and Geisser 2003, 181). These figures remained much the same with the succeeding RCD at the time of regime breakdown. In Syria, figures for the Ba'ath Party were relatively contained in proportion to the population which was double that of Tunisia, at least up to the mid-1980s with about 500,000 members in 1985 (van Dam 2011, 128). This was partially due to a more selective recruiting procedure.¹⁵ In fact, such selective procedures seemed to have been abandoned later on. Data reported by Bar (2006, 359) during the beginning of Bashar al-Assad's tenure put numbers for the party at around 1.8 million members (18% of the adult population).¹⁶ This expansion in the society, in all three cases, actually marked a decline of the party, as a decisional body, and its reduction to a mere instrument of patronage.

Relations with the opposition were ruled through co-optation (Ottaway and Choucair-Vizoso 2008). If in Tunisia and Syria religious parties were repressed, and the religious establishment was held under strict control – mosque imams were to be approved by the government – in the Egyptian case, a sort of coexistence with the religious establishment was set up (*al-Azhar* remained partially autonomous), and independent candidates, related to the Muslim Brotherhood, got limited access to parliament. This left the organization very active at the social level (Ben Néfissa 2007, 19). Only in Egypt and Tunisia did unions maintain relative autonomy, at least at the lower levels.¹⁷

Despite the pillars of the ruling coalitions being almost the same in all three cases, significant differences are noticeable that can be ascribed to the role of the military in relation to the other institutions: the party and the bureaucracy. To summarize, while in Egypt 'the military ruled but did not govern' (Cook 2007), in Tunisia they neither governed nor ruled, and in Syria they certainly governed and ruled.

In Tunisia, the army had been kept separated from the other two organizations by forbidding affiliation to the party (Camau and Geisser 2003, 165). Nevertheless, the army had been an integral part of the political coalition up to the 2011 insurrection, and had taken part in the repression of the bread riots in 1984. The regime had to take the defence budget into serious consideration. Although reduced in numbers, the professionalization of the army implied the maintenance of its role as one of the pillars of the coalition. However, in contrast to Syria and Egypt, the members of the military were strictly excluded from government positions. When Bourguiba was in power, local governorships (*wilayat*) were party-driven cadres (Charfi 1989), while under Ben Ali, the number of officers in the Ministry of the Interior was increased in this function as a response to the security threat that followed the 1990s repression against the Islamic party. Such a transformation coincided with an important change in party–state relationships. If the rise of Bourguiba had coincided with the rise of

the party – the PSD at that time – and the colonization of all state branches, the rise of Ben Ali marked the downsizing of the party as an instrument of policy decision, and the rise of a new class of technocrats who were imposed on the party. The party remained altogether an important instrument of consensus, and as a patronage machine at the peripheral level. It is not by chance that such a technocratic rise, which was consistent with the transformation from PA to PPA, occurred when the presidency itself directly controlled growing resources for patronage (Camau and Geisser 2003, 197).

The separation of the army from other institutions remained uncompleted in Egypt. In this case, the party was kept separate from the army, but there was no clear separation between the army and the state, at least as far as the crucial functions of political control were concerned. Members of the army were part of the government both through ministerial functions – they controlled the presidency and the Ministry of Defence – and local power (the governorships). Furthermore, their downsizing in the central government in the 1970s had been balanced by their increasing role in the economy (Cooper 1982).¹⁸ In Egypt, if on one hand the establishment of technocratic governments that followed liberalization had reduced the role of the party (NDP), as in Tunisia, on the other hand, all the functions pertaining to the army including the economic ones had been preserved. As the army reduced its control over the party, it gained, at the same time, increasing power to control the state indirectly, which had been adversely affected by liberalization.¹⁹ In fact, if these policies had eroded the NDP machine to the advantage of religious networks, the capacities of the military apparatus to achieve popularity, through the redistribution of essential goods, remained unchanged. The army had become a state within the state. It was the army that increasingly took care of redistributive capacities that were once provided by the state. This was also due to its direct connection with the important external resources provided by the United States through military aid (Richter 2007). While liberalization downsized public expenditure from US\$47 per person during 1980–85 to US\$37 in 2001–04, military expenditure doubled thanks to US aid, mainly as off-budget resources (Richter 2007, 184). Being a member of the army ensured a privileged position: the possibility of purchasing houses and goods at subsidized prices, and for relatives to have access to education and health systems, separate from the particularly inefficient services of the public system, and for the officers, once retired, to get new remunerative jobs in the private sector (Richter 2007, 185).

This socio-economic role played by the army in Syria was even more significant than in Egypt – one serviceman for every 43 citizens against one for every 84. In Syria, the most important income resources had been put under army control. Oil, for example, was partially excluded from the state budget. Liberalization did, however, have an effect. The state ceased to be the main service provider and employer. Here, too, liberalization had affected the redistributive capacity of the state through the party at the expense of rural areas.²⁰ It was within this perspective that significant sectors of the army considered Lebanon as a source of personal income (Bar 2006, 408). However, as distinct from Egypt, the fusion between state bureaucracy, the party and the military was by far stronger, given that the party strictly controlled the state. Similar to the PSD of Bourguiba in Tunisia, the Ba'ath Party had deeply colonized the state during Hafiz al-Assad's years in power, and had already penetrated the army before its rise in 1970. Under its supremacy, however, the highest ranks of the army put the party and the most important sectors of local administration under their control.²¹ Such functions were strengthened as security issues pressed for a harsher control of the opposition in the 1980s.²² The fusion between the state, the

party and the military was, therefore, stronger and the military acquired a dominant position.²³ Given the nature of the *cleavages* in Syria, which were less important in the other two cases, such a power structure also took on an ‘ethno-sectarian’ look.²⁴

Table 2 summarizes the degree of fusion of the two institutions with the military apparatus and includes the economic sector. In the Tunisian case, the exclusion of the armed forces, or of some of their members from the economic sector, even when retired, marked a significant difference from the other two cases.

‘Fusion’ does not mean that the party and the army are to be considered as a single institution, but that important members of one also retained positions of responsibility also in the others. In fact, and to a certain extent, these institutions were competitors.²⁵

If the four criteria of the institutionalization of an organization as described by Huntington in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968, 12–24) are now considered – autonomy, internal coherence, complexity and adaptability – when applying them to the three organizations examined herein, the following observations may be made:

- Given the degree of fusion between the organizations, in Syria, the extent of despotic intervention impacted on the organizational *complexity*, including the army, that was formally hyper-professionalized. For Huntington (1968, 18) a political system is ‘simple’ (not complex) when it rests on the role played by individuals. Chouet (1995) describes a Syrian nomenclature as being strongly made by parental and sectarian interweaving. This also influenced the degree of *coherence* of the institutions. ‘Factionalism’ in a given organization is, indeed, a good proxy for low internal coherence (Huntington 1968, 22).
- In the other two cases, the degree of *autonomy* between institutions was stronger. In Tunisia, the army was kept at a far distance from the other two. Moreover, the technocratization of bureaucracy had reduced the role of the party in the government. While this phenomenon also related to the other two regimes, it was more evident in the Tunisian case.
- The party was the most weakly institutionalized organization in all three cases, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt. Moreover, the party lacked autonomy, since it completely depended on the state. As a consequence, it only performed an auxiliary role. However in Syria government functions were still monopolized by members of the hegemonic party. In the other two cases, when liberalization policies were initiated, affiliation to the party was mostly subordinated to positions in the government.²⁶

The different structures of power and of relations between the institutions that formed the political coalition in power in the three countries can partially be explained by some historical differences that are briefly described.

Tunisia did, indeed, gain independence through the leading role of Neo-Destur (which later became the PSD). It was the party that led the country to independence and it was within the party that factional fights occurred. Once this was resolved under Bourguiba, the party became an instrument for strengthening the state. It was the party that further extended the authority of the state. After independence, the party did indeed become an instrument of mobilization and penetration of the society. The army did not contribute to such a process, since it had not played any role in gaining independence.

This was different in the other two cases, since the army had rapidly become the main instrument of state strengthening after the coup of the ‘free officers’ in Egypt

(1952),²⁷ and after the 1970 coup of Hafiz al-Assad. No single party had played a role in achieving full independence after the Second World War.²⁸ The 1970 coup put an end to a long period of political instability in Syria marked by a sequence of coups that had started in the 1940s. The supremacy of the Ba'ath dates back to 1963, but between 1963 and 1970 another coup took place, as a result of factionalism, both in the army and the party.²⁹ Syrian history up to that time was marked by a slow party conquest by the army. However, after the al-Assad coup, factionalism had ended as the ethno-sectarian domination by the Alawis in the army was complete. Party dominance therefore preceded military dominance, but soon afterwards the party and the army fused together and strengthened a state that had, heretofore, been very weak. In Syria, such fusion resembles patterns similar to those of some communist regimes (Perlmutter and Leo Grande 1982):

- Between the party and the army: there is a 'military' section within the party that governs the role of the party in the army, while the dominance of the army on the party rests on a structure that is much more significant – the Regional Command.³⁰ The military in the Regional Command, despite being a minority, at least since the 10th Congress (2005), were, at any rate, the most influential members.
- Between the party and the state: like the PSD of Bouguiba, the Ba'ath dominated the state and particularly its peripheral structures. Liberalization under Bashar al-Assad 'technocratized' the government to the extent that technocrats in the government were imposed on the party. Local politics were still dominated by the Ba'ath Party, as long as important patronage functions were upheld by Bashar al-Assad. This pattern was in the same in the RCD of Ben Ali.
- Between the military and the state: the military remained the most important actor. It absorbed a major part of the state budget. It was the biggest employer, and some governmental functions, even decentralized, were assigned to men in uniform. Contrary to Tunisia and Egypt, the Syrian case did not show a clear separation between the functions of the Ministry of the Interior and those of the Ministry of Defence. The former was subordinated to the latter, and its highest positions were mostly filled from the army. In addition, most of the elite units were positioned near the capital, along with the presidential republican guard, while in the other two cases they guarded their borders.

Similar to Syria, in Egypt the strengthening of the state also took place through the politicization of the army. However, a hegemonic party was created in 1962 after the coup d'état of Nasser, as a means of expanding the state. Therefore, although the army remained the most important actor with functions that were not limited to protecting the regime, as in the Tunisian case, in relation to the party its functions were much more clearly defined than in Syria. Formal distinctions between the army and the Ministry of the Interior were, at least, partially maintained.³¹ The army remained autonomous from the party and fused with the state only at the top. [Table 3](#) summarizes these differences. The state expanded during the 1960s in all three cases. In Tunisia, however, the army did not play any role and expansion was initiated solely by the party. In Egypt, the initiative to expand the state was taken by the army. The party followed by taking an ancillary role, while in Syria, the party and the army together took the initiative to strengthen the state.

Table 3. Historical sequences in state–party–army expansion.

Country	First	Second	Third
Egypt	Army	State	Party
Syria	Party	Army	State
Tunisia	Party	State	Army ^a

Note: ^aNo particular role was assigned to the army in enlarging the state. The army remained reduced in size.

The economic dimension: entering the age of post-populist dependency³²

Liberalization altered the consolidated structures of power. Generally, the role of the party got downgraded to the advantage of bureaucracy and the army. Liberalization influenced the outcome of the ensuing crises in different ways. In Egypt and Tunisia, it developed through two distinct stages. The first (*infatih*) occurred under state guidance with minor external pressures by the international financial institutions (IFIs). The state, in fact, maintained control of the most important assets, while believing that it would broaden support from the bureaucracy to the emerging middle class by favouring the private sector. In Egypt and Tunisia, socialist-inspired policies such as the nationalization of the banking and industrial sectors, in Egypt, and cooperativism, in Tunisia, had already been abandoned in the 1970s. In 1975 in Egypt, *infatih* opened up to private and foreign investment and the same happened after 1970 in Tunisia with the rise of Hédi Nouria as prime minister.³³ However, success was limited, as the state clashed with the religious networks in the 1980s. In Syria, liberalization began at the end of the 1980s, but with limited impact. Only after 2000, it became a deliberate policy under Bashar. This second wave of liberalization was implemented with the contribution of the IFIs and changed the internal balances of the regimes more deeply. As a result of liberalization, the once ‘populist authoritarian’ (PA) regimes, embarked on an oligarchical transformation (‘post-populist authoritarian’ – PPA). It is this phase that marks the rise of technocracy at the top of the government and the parties. Such a transformation definitively reduced the role of the party. The overall effects, in terms of the weight of public employment, between 1988 and 1998, had been different (World Bank 2004, 98). In that decade, there had been a modest contraction of employment in the public sector compared with the private sector in Tunisia, while in Egypt a further increase was recorded. In Egypt, the state continued to be an essential dispenser of services and the main employer in the non-agricultural sector and, generally, state expenditure for salaries and pensions continued to grow. The only recorded decrease was on subsidies for basic goods, which damaged the purchasing power of the poorest classes (Richter 2007, 184, 187). As a result, populist policies were seriously undermined. Hinnebusch (2010) states that such a transformation implied a ‘contraction of inclusion’ and the development of crony capitalism.

The same almost holds true for Syria. The public sector continued to dominate the petrochemical industry, the banks and half the manufacturing production, although before the crisis 75% of the workforce in the manufacturing sector was privately employed. Nevertheless, the state continued to limit the freedom of the private sector by limiting the size of the firms (Perthes 2004, 30–31).

Parties were the first to suffer because of the end of populism. In Egypt, party transformation had already started under Sadat during the first phase of privatization. The ‘Nasserist’ party – the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) – changed by presidential

instigation into the more ideologically faded NDP party. Although this change was initially contested by a part of the party itself, the transformation was accomplished at the end of 1978 by the cross-flooring of 250 members from the ASU to the NDP, followed by the dissolution of the ASU itself. This happened with the acquiescence of the political class which, to maintain patronage resources that directly emanated from the presidency, favoured such a transformation (Kassem 1999, 41). The transition from the 'Bourguiba' PSD to the 'Ben Ali' RCD occurred 10 years later, almost in the same way. At the grassroots level, the party remained substantially the same. What changed was the top. If government positions between 1987 and 2001 under Ben Ali are considered, only 5% retained the posts they held under Bourguiba and only 30% had previously been members of the PSD. The remaining had never been part of the PSD, as promotions to positions in the new party often followed government appointments. This marked the rise of the new technocrats, in both the party and government (Camau and Geisser 2003, 195).

Something similar also began in Syria during the last decade, although with unachieved effects. In all three cases, the party, at a local level, had only been partially affected by 'technocratization'. In Syria and Egypt, the 10th congress and the internal elections of the NDP in 2007 highlighted the attempts of party leaders to regain control of the top positions at the expense of the new class of external businessmen (Ben Néfissa 2007, 23–24). In Egypt, technocrats and businessmen turned to look to Gamal Mubarak, son of the president in place, as their possible opportunity to win over the party. Prior to the mass protests in 2011, his rise was strictly connected to the problem of succession. The problem was that the technocratic class was both disregarded by the military, the members of which feared losing their power of veto, and the party bosses who were in a weaker position, since they still depended on top prebends. In Syria, it was Bashar al-Assad himself who dealt with these concerns after the initial liberalization of the party. As a consequence, he decided to take control of the liberalization process.

Generally speaking, however, such technocratization at the top had impaired the ability of the parties to play a part in the decision-making process. The oligarchical transformation from PA to PPA implied the centralization of decision-making at the expense of the party. Decisions were now strictly concentrated within the government, while parties were reduced to mere patronage machines. Militancy in the party was perceived as a mere instrument to gain access to state resources. Their rooting in the rural milieu, more than in the urban one, proved this development, since liberalization was mostly favoured by the latter, and the party became of secondary importance.³⁴

In Syria, the effect of liberalization on the party was probably less relevant but, nevertheless, important and in step with the other two cases. Three growing trends can be recorded after the ascension of Bashar al-Assad:

- The government increasingly used independent technocrats outside the Ba'ath, and membership in the party no longer guaranteed promotion to the higher levels of the administration (Perthes 2004, 10).
- The once strongly 'ruralized' party (Batatu 1999) started to lose its grip on these areas the more liberalization reversed the distributive policies towards rural areas (Perthes 2004, 26; Lund 2012a). In 2011, the rebellion against Bashar al-Assad's regime started from within a rural district (Dar'a), which, under Hafiz al-Assad, had been one of the greatest beneficiaries of public resources, and one of the main strongholds in the Sunni area (van Dam 2011, 9).

- The rise of the second and urbanized party privileged the generation of cadres (Haddad 2004). This ‘new guard’, especially in Syria, obstructed access to the market of potential rivals. Liberalization had, therefore, an adverse effect on the private sector, and privatizations also largely benefitted influential members of the establishment who were more connected to the families in power. This is evident in all three cases, but especially in the Syrian one (Haddad 2004).

Although the military did not benefit from liberalization and their position was actually endangered by it, this was to a far lesser extent than the adverse effect on the party and only later. Tunisia stands alone as a case since the army had already been professionalized and secluded from the party and the government. On the contrary, prior to the onset of liberalization, in Egypt and Syria the army, having developed as ‘a state within the state’, was able to protect most of its privileges, and to veto any attempt to curtail its power significantly. The dormant opposition in the military apparatuses to the possible rise of Gamal Mubarak is to be viewed from this perspective.³⁵ Mubarak’s ousting from power, although risky, has therefore been an opportunity for the military to safeguard privileges and an essential role (Springborg 2011) that was consistent with its nationalist ethos. In Syria, any similar type of conflict between the top (the presidency) and the military was either almost non-existent in Syria, or had been previously resolved for mainly three reasons:

- Liberalization came later and was put under stricter control.
- The army carried more weight within the state compared with the Egyptian case.
- Liberalization may have affected some factions, but not the military as a whole.

If there had been any disagreement between the army and Mubarak before the crisis of 2011 in Egypt, this was not the case in Syria, since the military there had allowed the succession from father to son (Stacher 2012). In this case, it was the greater weakness of the Syrian economy compared with the Egyptian one, worsened by the loss of Lebanon, that probably speeded up the regime crisis to the point of eroding its redistributive capacities, without the privilege of benefitting from the external aid that had sustained Egypt.³⁶

Early stages of transition and their possible outcomes

In Tunisia and Syria, protests erupted in the rural areas of Sidi Bou Said and Dara’a. These areas used to be strongly penetrated by the hegemonic party, and these developments meant that the party was no longer an effective instrument of cooptation and citizen control. In the triangle of the state/bureaucracy–party–army, the party proved to be the weakest organization. In this regard, the decline of the state’s governing and redistributive capacities is especially evident through the prism of a party in decline that had been reduced ultimately to performing merely auxiliary functions. The army, in contrast, was spared a similar fate. There was no real decline in this institution, at least in relation to the state, but there was a general decline of the controlling capacities of the repressive apparatuses.³⁷ This probably resulted from the following socio-economic changes that were prompted by liberalization:

- In Syria and Egypt, the rapidly increasing demographic rates and, in all three cases, a sharp increase of urbanization. The state was no longer able to meet

increasing requests for services – primarily jobs – whereas the party reduced its power to control and govern demands. Consequently, the repressive apparatuses also lost their efficacy, while the religious networks expanded their action by supporting the poor urbanized classes (ICG 2004; Balanche, 2012).

- Liberalization mainly benefitted the affluent classes, and only partially the middle class. The middle class, in the public sector, also suffered from the economic decline (Ben Néfissa 2007, 16), despite continued government efforts to maintain a set of subsidies for the bureaucrats especially in Syria and Egypt. In Tunisia, and partially also in Egypt, the middle-class public sector soon joined the young demonstrators in the protests, whereas this did not occur in Syria, and for two reasons: the greater dependence on the regime; and the nature of sectarian cleavages due to the considerable weight of both Alawis and Christians in bureaucracy.³⁸

Patterns of transitional change are, therefore, occurring according to the different weight of the military in relation to state and party. In Syria and Egypt, the military is the actor that has the most to lose from a regime change. These patterns can be summarized by saying that while the military ‘accelerated’ the transition in the Tunisian case, in Egypt the transition was ‘kept under control’ by the military, and ‘hampered’ by the military in the Syrian case. Similar conclusions are also found in Lutterbeck (2011).

In Tunisia, the army rapidly returned to the barracks after the start of transition. In Egypt, the army remained one of the actors behind the scene, even after the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) had secured the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011–12. In Egypt, transition continued through a sequel of institutional crises between the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (CSFA) and the presidency, followed by a crisis between the latter and the Constitutional court.³⁹ Finally, in June 2012, the army put an end to the stalemate by enforcing strong measures against the FJP and its leadership.

However, in both cases the military facilitated the beginning of transition. This fact alone proved its centrality and strength in the Egyptian political system, which was greater than that of former President Mubarak. The Syrian case is different.

In Tunisia, the army was kept separate from the other two institutions, whereas in Egypt a separation was clear only in relation to the party. In the Syrian case, the boundaries between the three institutions were blurred. As a result of the ‘fusion’ of these three institutions – the state, the party and the army – transition has been impossible.

Syria is experiencing a civil war, characterized by a sectarian outlook (Lund 2012b). However, transition in Tunisia and Egypt also showed major differences. In Tunisia, elements of discontinuity from the previous regime are clearer – the dissolution of the former hegemonic party and the absence of a political role of the military – whereas in Egypt continuities are more evident since the military have never ceased to play a political role. Undoubtedly, the process in both countries is far from concluded, but the approval in Tunisia of a new constitution in January 2014, with a broad consensus in the Constitutional Assembly, has set the transition in the right direction.

As has been argued here, the structures of power of the previous regime are fundamental for an understanding of the ensuing path of transition. What has been defined as ‘fusion’ between organizations that were important pillars of previous regimes has had an adverse impact on the ability to sustain transition. What happened in Egypt, with the ousting of Mubarak from power, resembles what was argued by Linz and Stepan (1996, 66–68) as the role of the ‘hierarchical’ military (i.e. ‘military as institution’). When a regime is ruled by hierarchical military, and when these feel threatened as an institution,

they can exert pressure on the ‘military in the government’ to resign from political life and initiate ‘free elections’. However, they can impose, as a cost of political liberalization, the preservation of ‘reserved domains’ and the prolongation of the transition (Linz and Stepan 1996, 56, 61). This unfavourable situation, for an emerging democracy, could be challenged if only civil society were strong. Notwithstanding the existence in Egypt of an autonomous civil society and an independent judiciary (Rutherford 2008), the capacity of civil society remains doubtful, and all the questions raised by Ottaway (2004) remain posed about the absence in the Arab world of *constituencies* that may favour democracy. In the same way, the relevance for Arab countries of the ‘transition paradigm’ remains uncertain, since the outcomes of the Arab uprising are constrained by prior legacies (Hinnebusch 2013, 4).

The Tunisian case is different. In this case, fractures had been more apparent. No political meddling by the military has been recorded after the ousting of Ben Ali. Civil society is broad. Demographic pressure, although strong, is less disruptive and socio-economic indicators are more promising. In this case, the only concerns relate to a possible exacerbation of the conflict, and polarization between the secular and the religious camps after attempts at creating a common secular front seem to be successful. However, also in this case, exiting from a condition of economic crisis will prove to be the most important factor for the achievement of transition.

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Notes

1. Generally, monarchies have shown a greater capacity to resist opposition demands posed by new challenges. The reasons for that are various and will not be explored. However, most of them fall within the typology of the rentier state.
2. For the role of rent in Egypt, see Richter (2007).
3. Similar characteristics have been part of other Arab republican regimes in the past, but were no longer underlying conditions. Since 1992, Algeria has no longer had a dominant or ‘hegemonic’ party. The same was true for Iraq after Saddam Hussein, while Libya and Yemen were characterized by a weak, small and inefficient state.
4. ‘Ruling coalition’ is defined here as not only made up of individuals supporting the dictator, but also as institutions that are necessary for the political survival of the regime (Acemoglu, Egorov, and Sonin 2008, 987; Svobik 2009, 478).
5. Such an approach allows us to converge to the debate on the development of post-authoritarian civil–military relations. Among the different initial conditions that are likely to influence post-authoritarian civil–military relations, as identified by Croissant, Kuehn, and Lorenz (2012, 12–13), and proved to be applicable in our case, has been the historical role played by armies in state formation and national cohesion.
6. There is ample debate on the role played by domestic factors, and the likelihood of their causing regime change, in contrast to international factors. While in the past the dominant opinion was that domestic factors prevailed (from O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986 to Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989), authors have more recently attempted to stress international factors as an explanatory variable (Whitehead 1996; Pridham 1999).
7. Gerschewski (2013, 16) refers to it as the ‘actor-centred’ approach.
8. For Syria, see Hinnebusch (2001) and Perthes (2004). For Tunisia, see Camau and Geisser (2003). The latter is more a historico-sociological work. However, it incorporates the institutionalist perspective.
9. This has been defined by the authors as the ‘gorilla problem’, whereas the role of the established bureaucracy is defined as the ‘nomenklatura problem’.

10. For Egypt, see the enlightening article by Vannetzel (2007).
11. Source: IMF.
12. Despite the disconnection from the other two pillars of power – bureaucracy and party – according to Camau and Geisser (2003, 207, 211) the army continued to be an interest group that had necessarily to be taken into account by the central power.
13. The term ‘socialist’ is used throughout the text. This does not mean, however, a total state monopoly of economic activity, given that, together with the public sector in all three cases, a modest private sector did also exist during the ‘socialist’ phase.
14. They were, for the most part, businessmen, religious and tribal leaders (Perthes 2004, 21).
15. This figure is divided between full *membership*, about one-fifth of the total membership and the ‘supporters’ (*nasir*).
16. The figures for Egyptian NDP were more modest in relation to the population (probably eight times as much as the Tunisian one): only 1.9 million members at the time of the regime’s breakdown (see <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/22/national-democratic-party>). There was certainly an organizational problem, given the demographic size of the country. However, in the Egyptian case, according to Ben Néfissa (2007, 18, 48) clientelistic exchange was directly controlled either by MPs or by senior public officers, most of whom were members of the party. NDP supremacy over local politics was also witnessed in the results of local elections of 2002: the NDP won nearly all seats and was unopposed in 60% of the cases.
17. The Syrian case was different as the unions became part of the party (Perthes 2004, 12).
18. The Ministry of Defense and the military production sector alone still employ about 40,000 people. The Ministry of Defense controls the military industry (about 100,000 additional employees). Some evaluations estimate that about one-third of civil production – infrastructures, services and basic necessity goods – are produced by factories controlled by retired members of the armed forces.
19. It is not by chance that in the 1990s subsidies on goods provided by the regime to citizens, which had been part of a policy agreed with international authorities, were reduced by 14%, while in the same period the army budget was increased by 22% (Bellin 2004, 148).
20. Today about one-third of the workforce is still employed in agriculture and a quarter of gross domestic product (GDP) comes from this sector.
21. Except for Damascus, the governorships (*muhafazat*) were, in fact, governed by security committees composed of the governor of the province (usually a military man to be appointed by the Ministry of the Interior), the head of the local party and those in charge of the internal security (*mukhabarat*) (Perthes 2004, 12).
22. This issue became a priority during the 1982 violent repression of the Muslim Brotherhood in Hama. The repression cost at least 10,000 lives.
23. For example, the promotions in the party needed the approval of the security apparatuses (Perthes 2004, 12).
24. The Syrian political coalition was complicated by sectarian *cleavages*. This condition is barely present in Egyptian or Tunisian societies, which are much more homogeneous, or where only a regional prevalence can be noticed. In Syria, a series of historical circumstances that will not be investigated here (Batatu 1981, 1999) favoured the dominance of the security apparatuses, and of the elite army units by members of the Alawi community (10–12% of the population). Alawis controlled up to 90% of the higher ranks of the security services (Zisser 1998; van Dam 2011). The Sunni majority (60–70% of the population) was under-represented. However, according to Bar (2006), defining the Syrian regime as ‘Alawi’ is inappropriate as family strategies forced leading regime members to co-opt important Sunni families from Damascus, and some Sunni rural governorships – in particular *Dar’a* and *Dayr az-Zawr* – were well-represented, both in the party and in the higher ranks of the army, at least up to the beginning of the crisis.
25. For example, in Syria, the party, to a certain extent, offered some protection to its members from interference by security apparatuses. However, the same apparatuses gave a final approval to the candidacy of party membership (Bar 2006).
26. The *adaptability* factor is probably the most difficult one to consider. In all three cases, the institutions had already overcome several moments of crisis. With some rigidity, they were able in the past to overcome, at least partially, the generational crisis. With the exception of dominant parties that had all collapsed during the recent regime crisis, the capacity of

adaptation of the army and bureaucracy could be measured only *ex-post* after the transition. With the exception of Syria, where the regime breakdown has been accompanied by a partial collapse of the bureaucracy, in Egypt and Tunisia this has never occurred.

27. That happened in conditions similar to some East Asian countries. For more details, see Croissant, Kuehn, and Lorenz (2012, 12).
28. The *Wafd* in Egypt had, in fact, played a similar role before independence in 1922, but this happened before the establishment of mass politics.
29. The 1963 coup led the Ba'ath Party to power, as well as other nationalist formations. Only in 1970 did the supremacy of the Ba'ath become exclusive. In 1966, a new internal coup marked the rise of the military faction of Salah Jedid and Hafez al-Assad, and the expulsion of the civil and the historical faction of Michel Aflaq, which moved to Iraq.
30. The 'Regional Command' must be read as the (Syrian) National command, and was the equivalent of an executive command. Its name was due to the pan-Arab character of the party that nominally used different 'regional' branches (Iraqi, Syrian, Yemeni, etc.) that were, theoretically, subordinated to the 'National Command' that was inter-Arab; a sort of Arab 'Comintern' that had virtually ceased to exist.
31. In 2012, military expenditure still exceeded that of the Ministry of the Interior (25.4 billion liras against 22 billion). However, the latter was multiplied by six in the last decade, against only the doubling of that of the Ministry of Defense. In 2012, the Ministry of the Interior employed 800,000 people (ICG 2012, 10). The growing frustration of the military against the presidency not only derived from the perspective of a 'Gamal' succession, but also from a shift in power, in favour of the Ministry of the Interior, during the last years of Mubarak.
32. Hinnebusch (2013, 3) defines, as such, the post-1990 adaptation to neo-liberal capitalism of Arab countries.
33. In Tunisia, the cooperative sector was limited to agriculture. At the end of 1968, about one-third of the land was governed through the cooperative system which involved one-quarter of the rural population. However, since a good part of the rural notables served in the PSD, the pressure they exercised led Bourguiba to force Ben Salah to resign from the Ministry of Planning (Perkins 2004, 150–151). In fact, considerable foreign investment flows took place only after the rise of Ben Ali. The years of 'liberalism' under Bourguiba were characterized more by the mobilization of local resources. Camau and Geisser (2003) still call it 'autarchic capitalism'.
34. In Egypt, electoral participation rates under authoritarianism were much lower in the more affluent urban districts.
35. See Svobik (2009) on the risky situation for dictators, generated by a conflict of interest in the ruling coalition.
36. Oil resources were also running out. State capacities, as in the other two cases, mostly depended on state subsidies on basic goods or housing. After the reduction of such subsidies, the Sunni districts of Damascus exploded beyond state control (Balanche 2012).
37. For Syria, see Bar (2006).
38. About 80% of the workforce in the coastal areas, where Alawis are concentrated, was employed in the public sector. The Christian minority was also strong in the highest ranks of the central administration.
39. In August 2012, the test of strength between the CSFA and the presidency went through a new phase after the presidential announcement to eliminate the constitutional amendments passed by the CSFA, to limit the power of the President of the Republic. This was followed by the resignation of General Tantawi from his post as Chief of the Armed Forces and his demotion as a Presidential Advisor.

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