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# Fallen Idols.
# State Failure
# and the Weakness
# of Authoritarianism

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# Fallen Idols. State Failure and the Weakness of Authoritarianism

ABSTRACT

*The Author tackles the RoA thesis, and opposes to it the 'Weakness of Authoritarianism' (WoA) argument. According to the latter, the authoritarian regimes are politically poorly institutionalized, as it is proved by their incapacity to transmit the political power peacefully and smoothly. Therefore, the authoritarian regimes are by definition on the verge of breakdown, they are constitutively weak and they can only precariously survive only as long as some regime factors (a political party, a bureaucracy penetrated by the dominant elite, a loyal and efficient coercive apparatus) manage to stem social and political mobilization against the power incumbents. The institutionalization of the coercive apparatus should not be considered in itself, but together with other aspects of the political institutionalization of a given regime. Some evidence is drawn from the recent cases of regime breakdown in the Middle East and North Africa.*

KEYWORDS

Authoritarianism, Political Institutionalization, Regime Breakdown, Middle East and North Africa

SINTESI

*L'Autore prende in considerazione la tesi della "robustezza dell'autoritarismo" (RoA), avanzando l'argomento opposto della "debolezza dell'autoritarismo" (WoA). In base a questo argomento, i regimi autoritari risultano deboli a causa della loro bassa istituzionalizzazione, come mostrato dalla loro incapacità di trasmettere il potere pacificamente e regolarmente. I regimi autoritari sono, quindi, per definizione prossimi al crollo e deboli. La loro sopravvivenza può essere assicurata da alcuni fattori del regime (un partito politico, una burocrazia penetrata da una elite dominante, un apparato di coercizione leale ed efficiente) che riescano a canalizzare la mobilitazione politica contro i detentori del potere. L'istituzionalizzazione dell'apparato di coercizione, pertanto, dovrebbe essere considerato in congiunzione con altri aspetti dell'istituzionalizzazione politica di un dato regime. Alcune evidenze sono tratte dai recenti casi si crollo di regime nel Medio oriente e nel Nord Africa.*

PAROLE CHIAVE

Autoritarismo, Istituzionalizzazione politica, Crollo di regime, Medio oriente e Nord Africa

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, an influential article by Eva Bellin[1] advanced a challenging perspective with regard to the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and the relative resistance against democratization by the regimes of that geographical area. Bellin argued that although the MENA countries lacked the prerequisites of democratization (a strong civil society, a market driven economy, adequate income and literacy levels, democratic neighbors, and democratic culture), none of the explanations of the region's failure to democratize based on the theory of the prerequisites of democracy would be satisfying. Rather than searching for the causes which inhibited democracy in its prerequisites or preconditions, Bellin suggested to move the focus on the capacity of the authoritarian states in the MENA region to overcome the mass disaffection from the regime in power. Following Theda Skocpol,[2] who explained the relatively rare revolutionary events in contemporary world with the state's capacity to resort to the means of coercion and to maintain the monopoly over them, Bellin stated that "the solution to the puzzle of Middle Eastern and North African exceptionalism lies less in absent prerequisites of democratization and more in present conditions that foster robust authoritarianism, specifically a robust coercive apparatus in these states. The will and capacity of the state's coercive apparatus to suppress democratic initiative have extinguished the possibility of transition".[3]

There would be at least four crucial variables in shaping the robustness of a regime's coercive apparatus: fiscal health; the maintenance of international support networks; the level of institutionalization of the coercive apparatus itself, which is inversely related to its will to repress reform initiatives;[4] and finally the level of popular mobilization. The last two factors revealed recently to be decisive in the management of the political crises generated by the uprising of the population in the MENA countries, namely Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria. Facing a very high level of popular mobilization, the poorly institutionalized (and hence patrimonially organized) coercive apparatuses of Libya and Syria's regimes reacted repressing the reform initiatives and driving the two countries in a bloodbath, whilst the highly institutionalized coercive apparatuses of Tunisia and Egypt found out an accommodation with the reformers and eventually supported them in the transition and the pacific channeling of the popular mobilization. Indeed, "where the coercive apparatus is institutionalized, the security elite has

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1    Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East. Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective", *Comparative Politics*, 36 (January 2004), 139-157.

2    Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

3    Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism", p. 143.

4    "The more institutionalized the security establishment is, the more willing it will be to disengage from power and allow political reform to proceed. The less institutionalized it is, the less amenable it will be to reform". Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism", p. 145.

a sense of corporate identity separate from the state", and "it is distinguished by a commitment to some broader national mission that serves the public good".[5] In conclusion, the Arab Spring shows evidence that: "If the coercive apparatus is patrimonially organized rather than institutionalized, it is likely to be less receptive to the idea of change because it is more likely to be 'ruined by reform'".[6]

Although Bellin's interpretation could be scarcely said to be incoherent and drives our attention to the central 'fact' of politics, which is the intimate link between political action and the potential resort to the means of coercion by the actors involved in it, it is nevertheless arguable. Firstly, the institutionalization of the coercive apparatus does not progress on its own and separately from other aspects of political institutionalization, among which those inherently connected to the basic compounds of any political regime according to David Easton: structure of authority, rules and procedures, values.[7] The patterns assumed by the civil-military relations in the various regimes and the will and capacity of the military to intervene in politics depend on the level of institutionalization of their structures of authority, rules and values. From this point of view, it is questionable whether the authoritarian regimes can be said to be at all able to acquire over time a sufficient degree of political institutionalization. Normally, as it will be stressed later, in any authoritarian regime the structure of authority is badly defined and subject to the conditioning of various intervening factors, such as the role of a dominant party or of the dominant elite. Moreover, the limit of the power exercised by the leadership is scarcely foreseeable and subject to any sort of infringement by the member of the leadership. Rules and procedures can be easily manipulated by the dominant elite and twisted to please its own interest or occasional convenience. Nor it could be said that in the authoritarian regimes a generalized compliance to a set of shared values is usually to be observed. This is why the dominant elite repress sometime brutally any non-authorized expression of social and cultural identity, which menaces the legitimacy of the regime and is perceived as a threat to its identity. In Huntington's term, we could conclude that the political institutions of any authoritarian, namely its structure of authority, rules and procedures, and its basic values, are not generally perceived as valid and stable.[8]

Secondly, and more pragmatically, it is rather a striking contrast the one pictured by the thesis of the 'Robustness of Authoritarianism' (RoA), that of regimes whose survival and stability lay in the capacity to threaten its citizens even to the point of murdering them when necessary. To the Chinese dictator Mao Zedong

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5    *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

6    Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the ROA in the Middle East", *Comparative Politics*, 44 (January 2012), p. 129.

7    David Easton, *A framework for political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

8    Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968).

who used to say "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun"[9], one could answer using the words attributed to Talleyrand and often used by Napoleon: "*On peut tout faire avec des baïonnettes sauf s'asseoir dessus*". The survival and stability of any political regime are affected by its capacity to generate among its citizens support and compliance, which have to be to a certain extension genuine and willing, and can not be extorted point black. A well established tradition of political theory, streaming from Max Weber to Talcott Parsons, bolstered the opinion that a clear indication of power failure is the need to recur to violence. It is at the same time a clear indication of state failure.

The arguments advanced in the following sections can be summarized as follows. The institutionalization of the coercive apparatus (or its professionalization, the two processes being parts of the same phenomenon, as it will be argued) is a consequence of the differentiation of the state political functions, in other words the institutionalization of the coercive apparatus is a dependent variable of the *political* institutionalization of a given regime. The authoritarian regimes are generally speaking poorly institutionalized in comparison with the democracy, as it is proved by their incapacity of guaranteeing both the power incumbents and the power challengers. Therefore, the authoritarian regimes are by definition on the verge of breakdown, they are constitutively *weak* and they can only precariously survive as long as some *regime factors* (a political party, a bureaucracy penetrated by the dominant elite, a loyal and efficient coercive apparatus) manage to stem social and political mobilization against the power incumbents.

## 2. Some Preliminary Remarks on the Civil-Military Relations

Bellin claimed that her notion of "institutionalization of the coercive apparatus should not be confused with professionalization in Huntington's sense", but rather associated to Max Weber's concept of bureaucracy and its related qualities. Indeed, "institutionalization does not refer to the depoliticization of the security establishment and its subordination to civilian control".[10] Nonetheless, Bellin's distinction between professionalization and institutionalization introduces few ambiguities and rests on some arguable interpretation of Huntington's thesis. Firstly, Huntington argued that the professionalization of the military is a combined effect of the process of differentiation and modernization of the society.[11] The development of the professional military corps implied the introducing of educational requirement for entry the officer corps, a system of advancement

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9   Quoted by Eric Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics. Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

10   Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism", p. 145.

11   Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State. The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

based on experience, ability and achievements, the creation of military academies for fostering the military education, and the introduction of the staff system to support the military leadership in logistics and management of the activities in peace and war. This equals to say that a professional military corps has to be at the same time to a certain extension a bureaucratic corps and hence professionalization and institutionalization, i.e. bureaucratic organization, coincide or are two overlapping phenomena. Both the effects of institutionalization over the political life pointed out by Bellin coincide with the effects of professionalization according to Huntington: the development of "a sense of corporate identity separate from the state", and of "a commitment to some broader national mission that serves the public good".[12] Secondly, it is true that Huntington conjectured that professionalism of the military, which is a high degree of differentiation of the military institutions from other social institutions, is the condition for achieving a high degree of civilian control over the means or coercion, but conversely he stated that "the principal causes of military intervention in politics lie in politics, not in the military", and "even with a professionalized military establishment, however, military intervention may occur when the political institutions of society become weak and divided".[13] Therefore, the true question is: Why are the political institutions *weak* and *divided*? In Huntington's perspective the depoliticization of the security establishment and its subordination to civilian control are only conditional and depend on some political variables, namely the strength of the political institutions and their capacity to fulfill some essential functions of guarantee. The investigation of such functions is hence a preliminary task to be accomplished.

## 3. DEMOCRACY AND NON-DEMOCRACY

It will be avoided here to enter the everlasting controversy over the definition of authoritarianism and the subsequent debate over the classification of the authoritarian regimes.[14] As a shortcut in this tangled issue, it will be here stipulated

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12    Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism", pp. 145-146. Compare Bellin's perspective with Huntington's: "A professional officer corps [...] is jealous of its own limited sphere of competence but recognizes its incompetence in matters that lie outside the professional military sphere and hence is willing to accept its role as a subordinate instrument of the state". Samuel P. Huntington, "Civil-Military Relations", in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Mcmillan Company & The Free Press, 1968), p. 493.

13    *Ibidem.*

14    The beginning of the debate dates back to Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: the Case of Spain", in E. Allardt e Y. Littunen (eds.), *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems*, (Helsinki: Westermarck Society, 1964), 291-342. See among the most recent contributions on this topic Farid Guliyev (2011), "Personal Rule, Neopatrimonialism, and Regime Typologies: Integrating Dahlian and Weberian Approaches to Regime Studies", *Democratization*, 3 (18, 2011), 575-601. The issue has become even more puzzling since the introduction of an intermediate category between democracy and authoritarianism, such as 'hybrid regimes'. See L. Morlino, "Are there Hy-

that a sufficient and necessary characteristic of any democracy is *political plural-
ism*, from which open political competition derives and which makes political
participation effective.[15] Therefore, the more a political regime departs from this
basic characteristic the more it is approaching the authoritarian ideal-type,[16] and
from this perspective the authoritarian regimes may all be labeled as 'non-de-
mocracy', regardless to their specificities.

Political pluralism, as it manifested through genuine competition and par-
ticipation, may determine in democracy the turnover of the political leadership,
making it accountable, while participation and the distribution of political sup-
port generate some degree of responsiveness of the political leadership to the
popular demands, and hence a democracy can be defined as a *regime based on the
institutionalization of the political accountability*.[17] The institutionalization of the
political accountability, a typical and exclusive quality of the democracy, trans-
forms drastically the exercise of power, which in democracy is mainly possible
through the temporary control of some given roles of authority. Certain estab-
lished norms and procedural resources are associated to the roles of authority
in such a way to make the range of the political power foreseeable. Hence in de-
mocracy the exercise of power is limited within a predetermined range, the term
in power and the procedures for the change over of the power incumbents are
clearly established and it is possible to get rid of the power incumbents with-
out bloodshed. On the opposite, the 'non democracies' are constitutively *weak*,
because of their very low level of political institutionalization, which enhances
to an unbearable level the costs involved in the transmission of the power and
blocks the political process favoring some privileged groups at the expense of
others.

On these bases, it should appear as evident that normally a democracy en-
joys a relatively high degree of institutionalization of the political accountability,
while it results very low or totally absent in the authoritarian regimes.[18] In the

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brid Regimes? Or are They just an Optical Illusion?", *European Political Science Review*, 1 (2, 2009),
273-296, and Matthijs Bogaards, "How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and
Electoral Authoritarianism", *Democratization*, 16 (2, 2009), 399-423.

15   For an extension of this argument, see Giuseppe Ieraci and Angelo Paulon, "Measures of
Freedom, Democracy and the 'Freedom in the World' Index", *Quaderni di Scienza Politica*, 17 (2,
2010), 389-413, particularly pp. 391-393.

16   Oliver Schlumberger, "The political economy of state-formation in the Arab Middle East:
Rentier states, economic reform, and democratization", *Review of International Political Econo-
my*, 15 (4, 2000), 599-621, remarked that the liberalization of an authoritarian regime does not
imply necessarily its democratization through the establishment of democratic institutions
which guarantee political competition and participation.

17   Giuseppe Ieraci, *Teoria dei governi e democrazia. Ruoli, risorse e arene istituzionali* (Bologna: Il
Mulino, 2003), p. 26.

18   The following argument is derived from Giuseppe Ieraci, "Il crollo dei regimi non demo-
cratici. Stabilità politica e crisi di regime in Tunisia, Libia ed Egitto", *Rivista Italiana di Scienza
politica*, 43 (1, 2013).

latter, as already implicitly stated, the power capacity associated to the leadership (*raís*, *lider maximo*, *caudillo*, 'Council of the Revolution', President, King or however it may be identifiable) is not so well limited by the use of established norms and procedural resources. While the power is easily transferable in democracy because its range is limited and foreseeable, it is less easily transferable in the authoritarian regimes because the costs involved in such a transmission are not foreseeable. What will happen to the former incumbents? What will the new incumbents do with the former regime's structure and apparatuses? In democracy the transmission of power is a matter of time and it is pacific, with no consequences for the ones who are defeated. In any authoritarian regimes there is no timing for the transmission of power, and who is defeated in the struggle for power risks now everything, even his own life. Differently stated, in democracy the power does not belong to the incumbents, but it is rather abstractly attached to some institutionalized roles of authorities with formal and procedural attributions. In the authoritarian regimes, on the opposite, the power becomes a 'personal reserve' of the incumbents because the roles from which it is exercised are not formally defined. Moreover, in democracy power and relative capacities tend to become *public*, because they 'belong' to the formally defined 'office', not to the temporary incumbent. In the authoritarian regimes they tend instead to become *private*, because their limit and use are discretionary.

In democracy it is relatively easy and costless to get rid of the actual power incumbents, because the capacities attached to the institutionalized roles are not affected by the future power transmission, these capacities are autonomous from the individuals who have been using them since they got in office. In other words, in democracy the *likelihood of the transmission of power* is high and costless because the range and the effectiveness of the political power are foreseeable. On the opposite, in any 'non-democracy' the degree of institutionalization is low and to get rid of the power incumbents may result costly, the likelihood of the transmission of power is very low, because by removing the actual power incumbents the bases of the power themselves are destabilized. In any 'non-democracy', power and capacities are not fully associated with formal roles and established norms and procedures, therefore they can not be easily regenerated when the power incumbents are removed. Power and capacities are not autonomous from their holders. This is way to transmit the power is always such a conflict issue in a 'non-democracy', very often leading to a bloody *redde rationem* between the power holders and their challengers.

In any political regime the likelihood of the transmission of power is linked to another general property, namely the nature of the relation between political elites and social classes, which can be based on an *integration* pattern or on *cooptation*. Integration prevails in democracy, where the power acquired by the political elites and their organizations depends directly on the support gained in the electoral competition and maintained once in office. In search for popular support and for the support of the social groups, the elites offer political outputs but the

exchange established with the voters and the social groups reveals to be instable or flexible. Indeed, because the exchanged values may vary over time, the social groups have an incentive in offering their support to different fractions of the political elites, favouring their alternation in power, while the elites have an interest in enlarging as much as possible their support to maintain or enhance their actual power position. As a consequence, the ratio of the exchange between elites and social groups is always negotiable and open to various solutions. This pattern of relation fosters the integration between the political elites through the mechanism of the electoral competition and the channels of the political representation (parliament and political parties). Integration means the prevalence of shared patterns of behaviour and values, such as the recognition of the national parliament as the legitimate channel of representation and the electoral competition as a mechanism of selection of the government. The exchange of political outputs for support between elites and social groups is institutionalized.

Cooptation of the social groups by a dominant political elite is the recurrent pattern among the 'non-democracies'. The political elite enjoys a 'monopoly' over the power and its position is not immediately challengeable. The necessary support to the elite in power is provided by some privileged groups with which exclusive and direct links are established, even through patronage and clientelism. Sometimes a political party, whose organization is deeply ramified in the society, may guarantee these links, offering to the faithful social groups opportunities of promotion and achievement in the state bureaucracy and apparatuses, in the military corps and police. In some cases the party may even perform basic social functions, providing through its organizational ramification social protection, health care, revenue, family assistance, education and formation. The performance of these social functions may be a mean to distribute privileges and rewards to the supporting social groups, or it may be a way of making up for state decline and failure. Through the supply of these privileges and rewards the political elite binds some loyal social groups and excludes the others, and the more the access to the political power is occluded the more the political elite and the loyal social groups will reinforce they bond. The striking difference of the 'non-democracies' in comparison with the functioning of the democratic process is that the relation between political elite and social groups is not characterized by negotiation and flexible exchange, and that there is no institutionalization of channels which favour the trade offs between political outputs and support between. As a consequence, only some privileged groups are co-opted by the dominant elite while some others are marginalized and even repressed. Cooptation as a practice of government generates sub-cultural identifications (of ideological, ethnic and linguistic, religious, and tribal type) which the social groups may develop and use in opposing each other.

This is a way of finding an answer to the question why the political structures of the 'non-democracy' are *weak* and *divided*, which was asked at the end of the previous section. They are weak because affected by a null or *very low level of insti-*

*tutionalization* in roles of authority to which formal attributions and procedures are attached to make the handing of power from one incumbent to the next smooth and costless. They are divided because they do not integrate all the social groups in the democratic process, but rather co-opt some of them, distributing to them rewards and privileges, and marginalize some other. The former groups, which offer support to the dominant elite and receive benefits from it, are willing to recognize the members of the elite as 'idols' to respect, defend in conflict and even to worship. The marginalized groups, on the opposite, hate those 'idols' and their supporters. The exclusion from the distribution or benefit and rewards exacerbate their frustration and foster the desire for revenge. The 'non-democracies' are by definition poorly institutionalized regimes and they may survive in a perilous balance which preludes sooner or later to the outburst of conflict and breakdown. The 'non-democracies' are never robust; they are rather weak and their 'idols' are prone to fall.

## 4. Institutionalization and Political Stability

Democracy as a regime which institutionalizes the political accountability exhibits a relatively high capacity of guaranteeing both the power incumbents and the power challengers. This bilateral guarantee is provided by established rules for the transmission of power and by its fixed term and range of action. The weakness of the authoritarian regimes lies hence in their limited level of political institutionalization, which exposes the oppositions to the risk of being repressed by the unconstrained power holders, and eventually makes the transmission of power a rough matter with extremely high risks involved for both the actual power incumbents and their challengers. Huntington's celebrated definition according to which "institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability"[19] is very general and does not direct the attention to the *functions* fulfilled by the *political* institutions and to their different capacities to perform them effectively in various contexts. Briefly stated, the political functions of an institution could be grouped as:

– *Attribution of roles*: defining the roles of authority, their term, and the procedures for the turnover of the incumbents;
– *Allocation of resources*: defining the admitted range of action of each role on the base of some procedural resources attached to them;
– *Patterning of relations*: shaping 'arenas of the institutional confrontation' among the given roles;[20]

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19  Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 12.

20  See Giuseppe Ieraci, *Teoria dei governi e democrazia. Ruoli, risorse e arene istituzionali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

These three basic functions are clearly distinctive qualities of any democratic institutional framework, though the relative level of institutionalization may vary according to the cases and their development stage. It is thanks to them that the *power transmission* in democracy, when compared with the 'non-democracies', is smoothed down through the fixing of the terms for each role and the establishment of the procedures for the turn over of the incumbents. One of the main consequences of this institutional functioning is making the resources attached to the roles of authority relatively autonomous from the individuals who are currently occupying them.

The political institutions of a given regime, conceived as organizations and procedures, may acquire value and stability as long as they perform those three political functions, because they guarantee the two sides involved in the struggle for power, the actual incumbents and their challengers. 'Adaptability-Rigidity', 'Complexity-Simplicity', 'Autonomy-Subordination', 'Coherence-Disunity'[21] are more organizational criteria than direct indicators of true *political* institutionalization. An organization might as well be extremely developed in terms of 'Adaptability', 'Complexity', 'Autonomy', and 'Coherence', and yet offering very precarious answers to the basic issues of the allocation of the power resources and the transmission of power. If the dichotomy 'democracy versus non-democracy' was represented as a series of continuous variables along the three functions above listed, there would result a constant polarized distribution of the cases extracted to identify the two regimes. In democracy, the distribution of the roles is fixed and horizontal, the allocation of the resources is stable and known *ex-ante*, the political confrontation takes place into highly formalized institutional arenas. These properties make the transmission of the power through open competition sustainable. On the opposite, in a 'non-democracy' the distribution of the roles is discretional and hierarchical, the allocation of the resources is variable, and either there are no formally defined arenas of the institutional confrontations among the roles, or they are badly defined. As a consequence the power transmission can not be open and it rather takes place through mechanisms of closed co-optation.

In no way such a constitutive weakness of the 'non-democracies', i.e. authoritarian regimes, implies a future and unavoidable win for democracy. As many studies proved, the authoritarian regimes are able to survive for decades and their dominant elites manage quite often to ensure the continuity of the regime through the mechanism of political cooptation. Nonetheless the authoritarian regimes face recurrent crises, outbursts of violent rebellion, and are permanently on the verge of breakdown. Their capacity to repress the opposition is undoubtedly one of the key factors of their survival, but it should not be mistaken for a sign of stability or strength. Mao Zedong's quotation before recalled was complementary to another renowned one: "Our Principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party". A regime

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21   Huntington, *Political Order*, pp. 13-24.

which uses the guns to manage the conflict and force the 'solution' of a problem has failed, though the use of the means of coercion may not bring about its fall as a necessary consequence.

What are then the general conditions of political stability, or rather survival, of any 'non democracy'? An answer to this question could be drawn from the debate on the conditions of the *democratic* stability, where three general interpretations have become influential. The approach based on the characteristics of the 'political culture', inaugurated by Almond and Verba over fifty years ago,[22] has underlined the correlation between stability and the dominant political values. Where 'subject' or 'parochial' values prevail, sub-cultural identities and anti-loyal attitudes are likely to develop with regard to the political system. On these bases, a first hypothesis could be advanced:

HP 1: *The political regimes featured by low political institutionalization, therefore by high costs of the transmission of the power and by the block of the political process, favor the establishment of sub-cultural identities and loyalties, which in turn erode the consensus base the regimes and create the conditions for social conflict and rebellion.*

A second influential approach might be generally labeled as 'socio-centered' and it offers a complementary perspective to the cultural approach. According to Dahl, the conditions of the success of the poliarchy are the dispersion of the socio-economic resources and the neutralization of the coercive ones.[23] Harry Eckstein stated something similar when he posed that a cohesive democracy enjoys a considerable degree of congruence between the governmental and societal patterns of authority[24]. For both, the stability of a democracy is guaranteed when its political system reflects quite faithfully the harmonic distribution of equalities and inequalities to be found in society. Therefore:

HP 2: *The political regimes featured by low political institutionalization, that is by high costs of the transmission of the power and by the block of the political process, favor the exclusion of some groups and the concentration of the socio-economic resources in the hands of some other, which in turn determine a contraposition among the groups and create the conditions for social conflict and rebellion.*

Finally, there is the institutional approach inaugurated by Huntington, which has already been recalled. Huntington argued that the recurrent crisis of participation and mobilization in changing and developing societies can be surmounted

22   Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

23   See Robert A. Dahl, *Poliarchy. Participation and Opposition in Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

24   See Harry Eckstein, *Division and Cohesion in Democracy. A Study of Norway* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

by their political institutions, among which political parties play an outstanding role.[25] Thus extending Huntington's argument to the 'non democracies', it could be inferred that they can survive, although only precariously, as long as some regime organizations manage to channel mass participation in politics. Such regime organizations may be a political party, a bureaucracy penetrated by the dominant elite, or a loyal and efficient coercive apparatus, which manage to stem social and political mobilization against the power incumbents. Nonetheless, and contrary to Huntington, it is important to stress that in the perspective here advanced such regime organizations are not truly institutional. A political party, and even the state bureaucracy and the military corps can be deeply 'colonized' by the dominant elite who will use them as structures of opportunity to distributes offices and privileges to the members of the groups supporting the regime. Such regime organizations do not fulfill any of the three political functions above detected, and they do not promote either fair mechanism for the open transmission of power or a flowing process of trade-off between power incumbents and social groups. Simply stated, these organizations tend to be non-institutional or pre-institutional and having failed to recognize their true nature is one of the major pitfalls of Huntington's 'institutionalism'. They are non-institutional in their properties because they do not provide generalized guarantees for both sides involved in the struggle for power (incumbents and challengers), but they are quite effective as instruments of control of conflict and popular mobilization through coercion and manipulation:

Hᴘ 3: *The political regimes featured by low political institutionalization, therefore by high costs of the transmission of the power and by the block of the political process, control the access to the socio-economic and political resources and reduce the conflict by means of non-institutional regime organizations, thus the decay of these organizations creates the conditions for the breakdown of the regime.*

The three hypotheses can be combined together because they identify two complementary interpretative lines on the breakdown of the 'non democracies'. Hp 1 and Hp 2 focus on some 'social factors' capable of enfeebling the authoritarian regimes, such as the loss of legitimacy or a deep transformation in the values and culture orientations of the population. These changes are often combined with or they might trigger some process of redistribution of the circulating socio-economic resources, which might help the emergence and the progress of some of the marginalized groups. Hp 3 points out some of the internal 'regime

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25  'The modern, developed polity differs from the traditional, developed polity in the nature of its institutions. The institutions of the traditional polity need only structure the participation of a small segment of society. The institutions of a modern polity must organize the participation of the mass of the population. The crucial institutional distinction between the two is thus in the organizations for structuring mass participation in politics. *The distinctive institution of the modern polity, consequently, is the political party*'. Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 89 (Italics added).

factors' (political parties, state bureaucracies and apparatuses, military corps, regime militias) which explain how such lowly institutionalized regimes as the 'non democracies' may extend their capacity of exercising social and political control over the population and the oppositions. Nonetheless the propensity of the 'non democracies' to survive and their duration in the short and medium run, thanks to the 'regime factors', should not be mistaken for a sign of political stability. When eventually the regime organizations weaken, because the links between the organizations themselves and the supporting social groups loosen, or because new cycles of social mobilization have been triggered, the 'non democracies' waver and sometimes fall down unexpectedly with a crash.

## 5. A Theoretical Model and Its Attempted Application

The theoretical connections among the three sets of variables in the general hypotheses previously outlined are sketched in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1: De-institutionalization and revolutionary breakdown in the 'non democracies'. A Theoretical Model
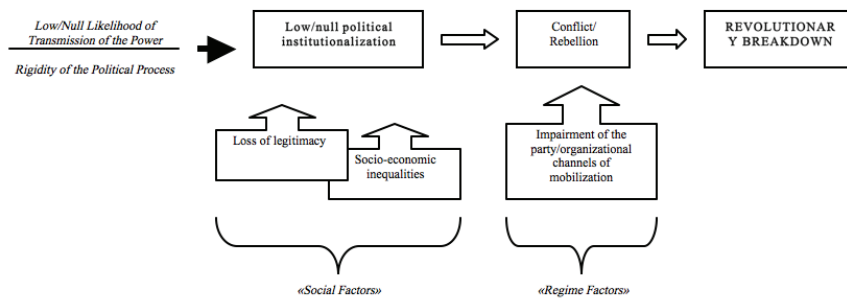


Source: Ieraci, 'Il crollo dei regimi non democratici'.

The major weakness of the 'non democracies' lies in their extremely low level of institutionalization, as it is revealed by their incapacity to assure the peaceful transmission of the power and to promote a sufficiently elastic political process. The struggle for the political power is not open and the political process furthers the interests of some privileged groups at the expense of others. The 'non democracies' may survive even facing loss of legitimacy and growing social inequalities, as long as the supporting social groups stay loyal, the regime is able to co-opt new supporters, and above all the regime organizations carry on performing effectively their control and channeling of the popular mobilization. In the hypothetical model of Fig. 1, the two key 'social factors' impact negatively on the

precarious level of institutionalization of the regime. Indeed, fall in the belief of the legitimacy of the regime or widespread disloyal attitudes towards it are generated among the marginalized and excluded groups, which perceive themselves as 'subject' and react reinforcing their ascriptive nature and their internal links. Remarkable socio-economic inequalities, as in the well known mechanism of the 'relative deprivation',[26] strengthen these feelings and if the 'regime factors' are impaired by inefficiency and fail in channeling the popular mobilization violent rebellion might erupt and escalate to an open revolutionary process.

The hypothesis outlined here is that, despite a very modest level of political institutionalization, remarkable levels of socio-economic inequality, and the increasing de-legitimization, the regime may have chances of survival if the 'regime factors' work positively. In particular, some organizational channels offered to the political mobilization (a party, the state machinery, the coercive apparatus) may inhibit the conflict or the open rebellion and, in this way, contribute to stabilize the regime. It follows that, on the contrary, even the momentary interruption of these channels removes the inhibitions and the protest, even confrontational and rebellious, can mount up to the revolutionary threshold and bring about the collapse of the regime. This interpretation opens up new questions. Why do the non-democratic regimes last, sometimes for so long? Secondly, is there a time limit of such duration? Why do these regimes collapse so suddenly and get easily crashed, when they seem so 'robust'?

These questions reveal a paradox. Duration is a stabilizing factor of a democratic regime, because time settles the actors' attitudes, forces their behaviors in recognizable and predictable patterns, and establishes mutual expectations; shortly, time favors the process of institutionalization already described. But the opposite applies to the 'non democracies', which are more exposed to recurrent crises the more they last over time. The 'non democracies' may success in fixing quickly their initial basis of consensus, or rather strengthening the cohesion of the 'dominant coalition' supporting the regime,[27] because they are able to supply immediately rewards and distribute privileges to their supporting groups. Nonetheless, in the long run they encounter difficulties to regenerating the consensus, owing to the rigidity of the political process and to the inhibition of the transmission of power. Shortly, they are exposed to failure due to their very limited or null level of political institutionalization. Therefore, the frustration of the marginalized groups intensify and, should the already recalled organizational channels of social and political control fail, the 'non democracies' become exposed to protest and even rebellion. But how long can a 'non democracy' last?

Social sciences do not provide accurate and controllable forecasting models, and we can only rely on induction. If the cases of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Syria

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26  Tedd Gurr, *Why Men Rebel?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

27  The concept of 'dominant coalition' is employed by Leornardo Morlino, *Democrazia e democratizzazioni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

are taken into account, it could be observed that, with the exclusion Al Sadat in Egypt, who held the power only for 11 years before he was killed in 1981 in an attempt organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, the other leaders exercised their power for periods ranging between 25 and 40 years. In Tunisia, Bourguiba governed for 30 years (1957-1987), and his successor Ben Ali for 23 years (1987-2011); Gaddafi in Libya held the power for 42 years (1969-2011); Mubarak succeeded Al Sadat until 2011, staying in power for 30 years; finally, in Syria Al-Asad governed for 29 years (1971-2000), but now his son is facing a tremendous crises. The generation extension (25-30 years) seems thus the extreme time limit of the duration of the autocratic government, after which internal removal, death or assassination put an end to the power of the leader. The 25 years 'threshold generation' could be draw as the limit *ad quem* of the duration of the non-democratic regimes, beyond which they have to address the problem of the transmission of the power and of the legitimacy of a new leadership, with no institutional mechanisms for the purpose. The almost certain impossibility for the 'non democracies' to transmit the power without bloodshed or violent conflict is the most blatant evidence of their lack of any institutionalization and the clear sign of their weakness.

It is likewise questionable whether the coercive apparatus is the primary instrument of control in the 'non democracies'. Other 'regime factors' or non-institutional mechanisms are at work, which reduce the means of coercion to an ultimate resort. The role of a dominant party in each of the MENA countries should not be underestimated and this does partially justice to Huntington's hypothesis. The party organization, as above argued, can not make up for the deficit of institutionalization of the 'non democracies', but it serves well the purposes of social an political control and above all it provides to the dominant elite an efficient channel for the cooptation of the social groups and sometimes the management of the economy. The party organization worked well as mobilizing channel for decades in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria. The Tunisian Constitutional Democratic Rally (CDR), the Egyptian National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Baath Party in Syria were branched and well-established organizations. They managed in those regimes various aspect of the social life, from the access to the state bureaucracy via patronage to the control of market sectors and of the national economic system. It would be a mistake to consider the Syrian hereditary succession from Al-Asad to his son Bashar as a sign of stability,[28] as the subsequent events proved, because any transmission of power destabilizes the 'non democracies'. This is also especially true in Syria and Egypt where the army plays a role of social and economic relevance, and the selection of the new leaders has been strongly conditioned by the military hierarchy.

These 'regime factors' (the military, the party organization, and even the state bureaucratic apparatus) disguise the real weakness of the 'non democracies', which

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28   As it is done by Joshua Stacher (2011), 'Reinterpreting Authoritarian Power: Syria's Hereditary Succession, *Middle East Journal*, 65 (2, 2011), 197-212.

is their difficulty to transmit the power. The 'Arab Spring' has focused on countries that have reached or overtaken the 25 years 'threshold generation', and this timing is a triggering cause of crisis, because of the lack of any institutional mechanism to hand the power and of the rigidity of the political process which has neglected large sectors of the society. Some formally democratic traits of these regimes may be misleading, but both in Tunisia and Egypt the elections were not free, because they excluded the oppositions, while the Parliaments held a symbolic function of ratification of the will of the autocrats, both for its position and irrelevance in decision-making and for the presence of a dominant party. In Tunisia, 20% of the seats were formally reserved for the opposition, but the CDR of President Ben Ali assured more than 80%, thanks to an electoral system which attributed to the majority party in each constituency all the available seats. A similar dominant position was held in Egypt by the NDP, but the growth of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2005 elections, when it gained about 20% although forced to present its candidates as 'independent', was contrasted by the regime resorting to violence in the attempt to influence the outcome of voting.[29] The breakdown of Libyan regime under Gaddafi does not pose the same puzzle. The hegemonic position of Gaddafi's clan and his allies was clear, there were no political elections, because in the structure of the Jamahiriya the representatives of the cities, villages and communities flowed through the districts in the General People's Congress, over which, however, acted with absolute dominion the Council of the Revolutionary Guide controlled by Gaddafi. Tunisia and Egypt could count on effective administrative systems, while the same can not be said in the case of Libya, where the personal connections to the dictator and the privileges of the clan membership prevailed. The judiciary was relatively independent in Tunisia and Egypt, though in both cases the regimes tried to condition it through the exercise of political pressure, jeopardizing its internal promotion system, and regulating accordingly the resources.

According to the RoA's thesis, coercion is the key factors of the persistence of the authoritarian regimes. The police forces were in Tunisia and Egypt effective apparatuses of control and repression at the disposal of the ruling parties and the governments, while consistence and role of the army varied in the two cases. The Tunisian army consists of about 32,000 units, including the Navy, and was never directly involved in war (apart from sending a small contingent in Egypt during the war against Israel in 1973). It can be regarded as essentially depoliticized. On the contrary, the Egyptian army is numerically very large (almost 900 000 units, including the reservists) and holds significant interests in the economic and productive sectors. Some Egyptian industries and firms are directly controlled by the Ministry of Defense, or by their officials or retired generals who occupy top managerial positions. Through the Ministry of Defense, very large sectors of the Egyptian economy has been subject to military and state control, so it is not sur-

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29   Hendrik Kraetzschmar. and  Francesco Cavatorta, 'Bullets over Ballots: Islamist Groups, the State and Electoral Violence in Egypt and Marocco', *Democratization*, 17 (2, 2010), 326-349.

prising that recent trends towards privatization and market opening have been opposed by the military. Moreover, the three leaders of modern Egypt (Nasser, Al Sadat and Mubarak) came from the army.

The Libyan army consistency was estimated around 25 000 units among professionals and conscripts. It was organized into 'brigades' (*kata'ib*), which had a tribal matrix and were also based on the recruitment of foreigners from related tribes. Among the 'social factors' of the regime, the tribal element was central in the Libyan case. It pervaded the administrative structure of the system, while it was relatively absent in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt. In Tunisia, the French colonial government had already tried to eradicate the tribes and President Bourguiba continued this policy forcing some tribes to migrate to Libya. Similarly, in Egypt both the action of the colonial government and of Nasser led to the eradication of the tribal element, although non-negligible differences persist between the social classes and between urban and rural notables. In Tunisia and Egypt the organizations of the ruling parties replaced the tribal structures or at least overlapped them to a point of making them no longer recognizable. Finally, in Tunisia and Egypt, unlike Libya, a network of relevant social groups, more or less directly linked to the regime, developed. In Tunisia acted two important functional groups, such as the central union UGTT (Tunisian Union Générale du Travail) which was strongly penetrated by the CDR, and the organization of the entrepreneurs UTICA (Tunisian Union de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat) which through the years hardly showed any autonomy and capacity of independent action from the regime. The Muslim Brotherhood is active in both Tunisia and Egypt, but if in the former case, the appointment of the imams by the government has limited its oppositional potential, in Egypt it has acted independently through the establishment of NGOs which provide social services and assistance, and in this way it has been able to enlarge his support and followers especially among the poorer classes. The Muslim Brotherhood emerged gradually in Egypt as one of the main opposition groups to the regime,[30] and the army tried through the years to uproot it by means of repression and political prosecution. When the Muslim Brotherhood gradually became penetrated by the ultra-conservative wahhabism, it revealed to be an unexpected backing group of President Mubarak's efforts to contain the modernizing trends in society.[31]

During the early stages of the 'Arab Spring', the protest has involved especially the younger generations and exhibited a social and economic connotation. The economic opportunities offered to the emerging social groups, often urbanized youth with higher education, were so unsatisfactory to trigger protests. The widespread perception of closure of the regime and its corruption did the rest,

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30  See Gilles Kepel, *Le Prophéte et Pharaon. Les movements islamistes dans l'Egypte contemporaine* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1984).

31  This interpretation is advanced by Alaa Al Aswany, *On the State of Egypt: What Made the Revolution Inevitable* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

exacerbating the protest and taking it into open rebellion. The Egyptian case is, from this point of view, emblematic, because the sum of these factors were already evident in the pre-revolutionary phase: growing poverty, unemployment, corruption, repression, deficiencies in ensuring the basic rights, such as health and education, while the regime was primarily concerned to ensure the succession of the presidency from Hosni Mubarak to his son Gamal.[32]

These 'social factors' (social and economic discontent, loss of legitimacy, growing impact of the religious movements) did not manifested suddenly in early 2010, they must have been incubating for a long time and possibly remained in a latent state for decades. As a paradox, the RoA thesis fails to explain the outbreak of the 'social factors'. When coercion is 'needed', because the 'social factors' finally exercise their pressure on the regime, coercion does not suffice to contain protest and rebellion and the sudden fall of the 'idols' of the regime may be the outcome. Were then the Arab authoritarianism really so robust? It seem that the outburst of the 'social factors' alone can not be the primary cause of the collapse of authoritarianism in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. For decades these factors have acted, but the regimes were able to cope with the discontent thanks to their organizational apparatuses (the police, the military, the party, a state bureaucracy designed to favor the supporting 'client' groups). It was an illusory stability and robustness, the regimes did not have any true institutional mechanism to transmit and regenerate the power and could survive only as long as the potential 'social factors' of instability and turmoil stayed latent. In Tunisia, the CDR occupied for decades all the important political positions within the regime, becoming the permanent and pervasive political instrument of recruitment in the administration and in the political sphere. The Tunisian army, while not occupying a position as important as in the case of Egypt, provided ongoing support to the party and the connection between party and army ensured the survival of the regime. In Egypt, the army was the main stronghold of the regime, performing a function in many ways similar to that of his counterpart in Turkey, while the liberalization of the political competition was never effective.[33] In Libya, the backbone of the regime appeared to be the tribal structure and the network of direct relations with the dictator.

The crisis and eventually the breakdown of the Arab authoritarian regimes are to be found in the 'regime factors'. Nonetheless, it is not easy to detect the failure of the 'regime factors'. A possible way out is offered to us by the observation of recent events, as a strategy of ex post investigation, arguing that if the 'regime factors' had some relevance in the stabilization of the authoritarian power for decades, it is likely that the current crises bestowed on them their more evident effects. This simple investigation strategy seems promising. In Tunisia, between the end of 2010 and October 2011, the elections for the Constituent Assembly were

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32   *Ibidem.*

33   The political reforms in Egypt and their limited impact, see Eberhard Kienle, *A Grand Delusion: Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ldt., 2001).

held (January 14, 2011), the government was overthrown and President Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia; in the aftermath the Prime Minister Ghannouchi resigned; the political police was dissolved; the CDR was declared illegal and disbanded, all its assets were confiscated; the political prisoners were released. The crisis in Tunisia invested directly the 'regime factors': the single party and its leadership, the police forces and its apparatus. This is too much of a striking evidence not to infer the conclusion that the authoritarian Tunisian regime was far from being 'robust' and to invalidate the RoA hypothesis. How come that such supposed to be 'robust' apparatus liquefied once exposed to the very first serious challenge to the regime in many years?

Something similar occurred in Egypt in 2011. The protests and the movement of Tahrir Square shook the regime and put the armed forces and police in front of the dilemma either to repress or tolerate. In February President Mubarak was removed and prosecuted as responsible for the victims caused by the recent disorders and the clash between police and protesters. Two appointed prime ministers resigned in succession (Nazif and Shafik), and after the suspension of the constitution, the military assumed the power. The parliament was dissolved, the state security services dismantled, the NDP disbanded and its assets transferred to the state. In the Egyptian crises the role of the army was initially neutral, but as soon as the breakdown seemed unavoidable, the army took over the power without any attempt to save the exiting regime. Once again, we are facing the same puzzle. The 'robust' stronghold of the Egyptian authoritarian regime refrained from backing it and assumed a rather *super partes* attitude in the civil and political disorders. Finally, in Libya, the total absence of organizational elements backing the system, as the party and the army in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, opened the field to the direct protest against the dictator and his circle. A conflict or rather a civil war between factions erupted, opposing the army and the forces loyal to the regime and Gaddafi in Tripoli and concentrated in some internal regions of the country, to the "rebels" moving from Cyrenaica and supported by foreign military intervention. The European powers and the U.S., joined under the NATO and on the basis of some UN's resolutions engaged in the battle and legitimized the constitution of the National Transitional Council (NTC). The international military intervention was decisive in the outcome of the war in favor of the NTC, which after the capture and death of Gaddafi was internationally recognized as the exclusive authority of government in Libya.

## 6. Conclusions

Weakly institutionalized regimes react in different ways to the challenge of social mobilization,[34] or to the action of what could be labeled 'social factors', ac-

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34  Eva Bellin, 'Reconsidering the RoA in the Middle East', pp. 135-136, stressed the different impact of the process of social mobilization in the Arab world.

cording to the variable capacity of some 'regime factors' to channel and control discontent, protest and open rebellion. Not only these 'regime factors' may perform differently from case to case, but they can be even different in their nature. The authoritarian regime of Tunisia had its stronghold in the ruling party and in the state apparatus. The CDR and the political police at its disposal were dismantled immediately after Bel Ali's flight. This opening of the political space offered new opportunities to the oppositions, with the consequent creation of various parties, including the confessional Ennahda and some 'liberal' parties (Congress of the Republic, the Democratic Forum for Labour and Freedoms). Nonetheless, the state apparatus, purged of the presence of representatives of the DRC, maintained sufficient degrees of functionality, while the involvement of the army in the riots was negligible. The forced exile of Ben Ali and his entourage assumed the symbolic value of an epoch-making change. The transition could thus go through negotiations between the political forces until the election of a Constituent Assembly, because the 'regime factors' were at least partially persistent and made up for the complete breakdown of the political ruling elite.

Something similar happened in Egypt, although there the key 'regime factors' revealed not to be the state apparatus and the party but the military. Indeed, the NDP was swept away by the crisis, and Mubarak was ousted on February 11, 2011. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, headed by General Tantawi and composed of 20 senior officers, seized the power in a way which almost appeared like military coup. It followed a phase characterized by conflict between the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the new political forces, and eventually the incoming presidential election (23-24 May 2012) was opened to candidacies of the oppositions too. Mohamed Morsi (Muslim Brotherhood) was elected with about 52% of the votes, but immediately the High Court, controlled by the military, tried to impinge his action and jeopardize his legitimacy. A heated confrontation resulted. The High Court (June 14, 2012) dissolved the Parliament elected the previous winter and dominated for three quarters of the seats by representatives of the Islamic formations, but President Morsi annuls by decree the decision of the High Court ( July 8) and restores the Parliament in its functions. His action was strongly backed in the streets by the movement 'April, 6', the Islamic youth organization which constituted the backbone of the protests in Tahrir Square. While the secular political forces appeared divided, the conflict between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood escalated but paradoxically was contained in its initial judicial form. President Morsi obtained his first   tangible success on August, 12 removing Hussein Tantawi as Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defense, and abolishing the constitutional decree of the High Court which on June, 17 had deprived him of the title of Supreme Head of the Armed Forces.

The cases of Tunisia and Egypt show the different effects of the 'regime factors' on the transition from the authoritarian regime. In Tunisia, the dissolution of the CDR, the sudden elimination of its power network, the flight of Ben Ali and the neutrality of the armed forces opened the competitive space to various

political parties, without exception, supporting the launch of a constituent process. In Egypt, after the party which offered a political façade to the military rule was swept away, the power of the army remained effective, also because of its roots in the civil society and in the economic system. The army tried to preserve its role and influence during the transition phase and after the election of Morsi. Although it is hard to forecast the outcome of the current confrontation between the persistent 'regime factor' (the Army) and the political forces emerged from the crisis, Egypt is bound to go through a long phase of instability and such a 'factor' is going to exercise its conditioning action on the dynamics of democratization. Egypt, in other words, is caught between Scylla and Charybdis, between the possible evolution towards a political model which might resemble nowadays Turkey, and the danger of a sudden outburst of violence which would heavily involve the army, similarly to Syria at the present time. Compared to the two cases of Tunisia and Egypt, that of Libya is less linear. The outcome of the civil war was the overthrow of Gaddafi's personalistic regime, but at the same time the tribal original structure of the Libyan community appeared again in all its strength. Gaddafi failed in shaping Libya as a national community and the Jamahiriya was only a political façade to cover the tribal structure of the regime and the pattern of political exchange between the dictator and some privileged groups. It is thus unclear to what extent the NTC will be able to establish itself as a reference to Libyan political community as a whole. Altogether, Libya is left with the memory of its 'fallen idol' and a landscape of political ruins.

The weakening of the 'regime factors' is thus essential to interpret the recent pushes towards democracy in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. As long as these factors retain their effectiveness, the emergence of a social crisis, such as the loss of legitimacy of the regime, or the change of cultural orientations, or the growing social and economic inequality, can be controlled through the channels of political mobilization and organization available to the regime (a single party, the tribal structure, the bureaucracy, the apparatus of repression). As a paradox, and as previously argued, the duration of these regimes is not necessarily an indicator of their stability or 'robustness'. The longer is the persistence of any closed regime, which is a regime characterized by unlikelihood of the transmission of the power and rigidity of the political process, the closer it is to its *terminus ad quem*. At that point, because such regimes lack any institutional mechanism for the effective regeneration of their ruling class and the transmission of power, they enter into a spiral of political instability; unavoidably their worshipped leaders become 'fallen idols' and then the regime faces the risk of a sudden collapse.

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# DiSPeS Working paper